

SERMONS ON REVELATION

SPURGEON BY THE BOOK

CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON

Edited by
NATE HOOVER

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apocalypse
press

FOREWORD

Charles H. Spurgeon has a nickname I will not repeat here for the Church's great problem in its history is to make too much of itself instead of too much of it's God.

Spurgeon's works are always being reformatted and republished for one theological reason, it's not that he can sell books (he can), it's not that he's entertaining (he is), it's because God owned him in a special way. When Spurgeon speaks, you can hear something of God talking, and you can get some special insight into the God who talks through men like Spurgeon.

John's Revelation is one of those books that can be a worship help - because of the greatness of its images - or it can be a place to get sidetracked trying to figure out its imagery and symbols. You will rarely find Spurgeon doing the latter, he is mostly caught up in speaking about Christ in these sermons on Revelation and trying to persuade you to forsake all to follow Him. The imagery of the book lends well to Spurgeon's goading of souls to the God-man: for you have fire and torment on the one side, and a beautiful eternity portrayed on the other. It's not a hard decision in Brother Spurgeon's hands.

Nevertheless, Spurgeon lived in the time when Post-millennialism of the Puritans was falling out of favor for the false prophecies of John Darby and the Plymouth Brethren, so he occasionally speaks to those topics.

I encourage you to peruse this book when you need to see the face of the savior in light of the immense darkness our world has slid into in the past hundred plus years since Spurgeon died. These sermons are built well for that.

NATE HOOVER

JESUS PEOPLE SF AND

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REVELATION 1

ONE
JOHN'S FIRST DOXOLOGY

SERMON GIVEN ON SEPTEMBER 2, 1883

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 1:5-6

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 29

*“Unto him that loved us, and washed us from
our sins in his own blood, and hath made us
kings and priests unto God and his Father;
to him be glory and dominion for ever and
ever. Amen.”*

REVELATION 1:5-6.

JOHN had hardly begun to deliver his message to the seven churches, he had hardly given in his name and stated from whom the message came, when he felt that he must lift up his heart in a joyful doxology. The very mention of the name of the Lord Jesus, “the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth,” fired his heart.

He could not sit down coolly to write even what the Spirit of God dictated: he must rise; he must fall upon his knees; he must bless and magnify, and adore the Lord Jesus. This text is just the upward burst of a great geyser of devotion. John's spirit has been quiet for awhile, but on a sudden the stream of his love to Jesus leaps forth like a fountain, rising so high that it would seem to bedew heaven itself with its sparkling column of crystal love. Look at the ascending flood as you read the words, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

Now, in the matter of this bursting out of devotion at unexpected times, John is one among the rest of the apostles. Their love to their divine Master was so intense that they had only to hear his footfall and their pulse began to quicken, and if they heard his voice, then were they carried clean away: whether in the body or out of the body, they could not tell, but they were under constraint to magnify the Saviour's name; whatever they were doing they felt compelled to pause at once, to render direct and distinct homage unto the Lord Jesus by adoration and doxology. Observe how Paul breaks forth into doxologies: "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." Again: "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen." The like is true of Jude, who cries: "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen." The apostles overflowed with praise.

This explains to me, I think, those texts which bid us “rejoice evermore,” “bless the Lord at all times,” and “pray without ceasing”: these do not mean that we are always to be engaged in devotional exercises, for that would cause a neglect of other duties. The very apostle who bids us “pray without ceasing,” did a great many other things beside praying; and we should certainly be very faulty if we shut ourselves up in our private chambers, and there continued perpetually upon our knees. Life has other duties, and necessary ones; and in attending to these we may render to our God the truest worship: to cease to work in our callings in order to spend all our time in prayer would be to offer to God one duty stained with the blood of many others. Yet we may “pray without ceasing,” if our hearts are always in such a state that at every opportunity we are ready for prayer and praise; better still, if we are prepared to make opportunities, if we are instant in season and out of season, and ready in a moment to adore and supplicate. If not always soaring, we may be as birds ready for instant flight: always with wings, if not always on the wing. Our hearts should be like beacons made ready to be fired. When invasion was expected in the days of Queen Elizabeth, piles of wood and combustible material were laid ready on the tops of certain hills, and watchmen stood prepared to kindle the piles should there be notice given that the ships of the enemy were in the offing. Everything was in waiting. The heap was not made of damp wood, neither had they to go and seek kindling; but the fuel waited for the match. The watch-fire was not always blazing, but it was always ready to shoot forth its flame. Have ye never read, “Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion”? So let our hearts be prepared to be fired with adoring praise by one glimpse of the Redeemer’s eyes; to be all on a blaze with delightful worship with one touch from that dear, pierced hand. Anywhere, wherever we may be, may we be clad in the

robes of reverence, and be ready at once to enter upon the angelic work of magnifying the Lord our Saviour. We cannot be always singing, but we may be always full of gratitude, and this is the fabric of which true psalms are made.

This spontaneous outburst of John's love is what I am going to preach upon this morning. First of all I shall ask you to consider the condition of heart out of which such outbursts come, and then we will look more closely at the outburst itself; for my great desire is that you and I may often be thus transported into praise, carried off into ecstatic worship. I long that our hearts may be like Eolian harps through which each wind as it sweeps on its way makes charming music. As roses are ready to shed their perfume, so may we be eager to praise God; so much delighting in the blessed exercise of adoration that we shall plunge into it when colder hearts do not expect us to do so. I have read of Mr. Welch, a minister in Suffolk, that he was often seen to be weeping, and when asked why, he replied that he wept because he did not love Christ more. May not many of us weep that we do not praise him more? Oh that our meditation may be used or the Holy Spirit to help us in that direction!

I. First, let us look at THE CONDITION OF HEART OUT OF WHICH OUTBURSTS of adoration arise. Who was this man who when he was beginning to address the churches must needs lay down his pen to praise the Saviour? We will learn the character of the man from his own devout language. We shall see his inmost self here, for he is carried off his feet, and speaks out his very heart in the most unguarded manner. We shall now see him as he is, and learn what manner of persons we must be if, like him, we would overflow with praise. It would be easy to talk at great length about John from what we know of his history from other parts of Scripture; but at this time I tie myself down to the words of the text, and I notice, first, that this man of doxologies, from whom praise

flashes forth like light from the rising sun, is first of all a man who has realized the person of his Lord. The first word is, "Unto him;" and then he must a second time before he has finished say, "To him be glory and dominion." His Lord's person is evidently before his eye. He sees the actual Christ upon the throne. The great fault of many professors is that Christ is to them a character upon paper; certainly more than a myth, but yet a person of the dim past, an historical personage who lived many years ago, and did most admirable deeds, by the which we are saved, but who is far from being a living, present, bright reality. Many think of Jesus as gone away, they know not whither, and he is little more actual and present to them than Julius Cæsar or any other remarkable personage of antiquity. We have a way, somehow, a very wicked way it is, of turning the facts of Scripture into romances, exchanging solidities for airy notions, regarding the august sublimities of faith as dreamy, misty fancies, rather than substantial matters of fact. It is a grand thing personally to know the Christ of God as a living existence, to speak into his ear, to look into his face, and to understand that we abide in him, and that he is ever with us, even to the end of the world Jesus was no abstraction to John; he loved him too much for that. Love has a great vivifying power: it makes our impressions of those who are far away from us very lifelike, and brings them very near. John's great, tender heart could not think of Christ as a cloudy conception; but he remembered him as that blessed One with whom he had spoken, and on whose breast he had leaned. You see that is so, for his song rises at once to the Lord's own self, beginning with, "Unto HIM.

He makes us see Jesus in every act of which he speaks in his doxology. It runs thus: "Unto him that loved us." It is not "Unto the love of God," an attribute, or an influence, or an emotion; but it is "Unto him that loved us." I am very grateful for love,

but more grateful to him who gives the love. Somehow, you may speak of love and eulogize it; but if you know it only in the abstract what is it? It neither warms the heart nor inspires the spirit. When love comes to us from a known person, then we value it. David had not cared for the love of some unknown warrior, but how greatly he prized that of Jonathan, of which he sang, "Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women!" Sweet is it to sing of love; but sanctified hearts delight still more to sing, "Unto him that loved us."

So, too, with the washing from sin. It is enough to make us sing of pardoning mercy for ever and ever if we have been cleansed from sin but the centre of the joy is to adore him "that washed us from our sins in his own blood." Observe that he cleansed us, not by some process outside of himself, but by the shedding of his own blood of reconciliation. It brings the blood-washing into the highest estimation with the heart when we look into the wounds from whence the atonement flowed, when we gaze upon that dear visage so sadly marred, that brow so grievously scarred, and even peer into the heart which was pierced by the spear for us to furnish a double cleansing for our sin. "Unto him that washed us." The disciples were bound to love the hands that took the basin and poured water on their feet, and the loins which were girt with the towel for their washing; and we, brethren, must do the same. But as for the washing with his own blood, how shall we ever praise him enough? Well may we sing the new song, saying, "Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." This puts body and weight into our praise when we have realized him, and understood how distinctly these precious deeds of love as well as the love itself come from him whose sacred heart is all our own.

So, too, if we are "kings and priests," it is Jesus who has made us so.

*“Round the altar priests confess:
If their robes are white as snow,
'Twas the Saviour's righteousness
And his blood that made them so.”*

Our royal dignity and our priestly sanctity are both derived from him. Let us not only behold the streams, but also consider the source. Bow before the blessed and only Potentate who doth encrown and enthrone us, and extol the faithful high-priest who doth enrobe and anoint us. See the divine actor in the grand scene, and remember that he ever liveth, and therefore to him should we render perpetual glory. John worships the Lord himself. His mind is not set upon his garments, his crowns, his offices, or his works, but upon himself, his very self. “I SAW HIM, says the beloved apostle, and that vision almost blotted out the rest. His heart was all for Jesus. The censer must smoke unto him, the song must rise unto him;— unto himself, unto his very self.

I pray that every professor here may have a real Christ, for otherwise he will never be a real Christian. I want you to recognize in this realization of Christ by John this teaching,— that we are to regard our holy faith as based on facts and realities. We have not followed cunningly-devised fables. Do you believe in the divine life of Christ? Do you also believe that he who is “very God of very God” actually became incarnate and was born at Bethlehem? Do you put down the union of the Godhead with our humanity as an historical fact which has the most potent bearing upon all the history of mankind? Do you believe that Jesus lived on earth and trod the blessed acres of Judæa, toiling for our sake, and that he did actually and really die on the behalf of sinners? Do you believe that he was buried, and on the third day rose again from the dead? Are these stories in a book or facts in the life of a familiar friend? To me it is the

grandest fact in all history, that the Son of God died and rose again from the dead, and ever lives as my representative. Many statements in history are well attested, but no fact in human records is one half as well attested as the certain resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. This is no invention, no fable, no parable, but a literal fact, and on it all the confidence of the believer leans. If Christ is not risen, then your faith is vain; but as he surely rose again, and is now at the right hand of God, even the Father, and will shortly come to be our judge, your faith is justified, and shall in due season have its reward. Get a religion of facts and you will have a religion which will produce facts by operating upon your life and character; but a religion of fancies is but a fancied religion, and nothing practical will come of it.

To have a real, personal Christ is to get good anchor-hold for love, and faith, and hope. Somehow men cannot love that which is not tangible. That which they cannot apprehend they do not love. When I was about to commence the Orphanage at Stockwell, a gentleman who had had very large experience in an excellent orphanage, said to me, "Begin by never expecting to receive the slightest gratitude from the parents of the children, and you will not be disappointed;" for, said he, "I have been connected with a certain orphanage," which he mentioned, "for a great many years, and except in the rarest case I have never seen any tokens of gratitude in any of the mothers whose children have been received." Now, my experience is very different. I have had a great many grips of the hand which meant warm thanks, and I have seen the tears start from the mother's eye full often, and many a grateful letter have I received because of help given to the orphan children. How do I explain the difference? Not that our Orphanage has done more than the other; but the other Orphanage is conducted by a Committee with no well-known head, and hence it is some-

what of an abstraction; the poor women do not know who is to be thanked, and consequently thank nobody. In our own case the poor people say to themselves, "Here is Mr. Spurgeon, and he took our children into the Orphanage." They recognize in me the outward and visible representative of the many generous hearts that help me. They know me, for they can see me, and they say, "God bless you," because they have someone to say it to. There is nothing particular about me, certainly, and there are others who deserve far more gratitude than that which comes, to me; but it does come to me because the poor people know the name and the man, and have not to look at a mere abstraction. Pardon the illustration: it suits my purpose well. If you have a Christ whom you cannot realize you will not love him with that fervent affection which is so much to be desired. If you cannot reach the Lord in your mind, you will not embrace him in your heart; but if you have realized the blessed Master, if he has become a true existence to you, one who has really loved you and washed you from your sins, and made you a king and a priest, then your love must flow out towards him. You cannot resist the impulse to love one who has so truly loved you, and is so well known to you.

This also gives foothold to faith. If you know the Lord Jesus you feel that you can trust him. "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee." Those to whom Christ has become a well-known friend do not find it difficult to trust him in the time of their distress. An unknown Christ is untrusted; but when the Holy Spirit reveals Jesus he also breeds faith. By the same means, your hope also becomes vivid, for you say, "Oh, yes; I know Jesus, and I am sure that he will keep his word. He has said, 'I will come again and receive you unto my self and I am sure that he will come, for it is not like him to deceive his own chosen.'" Hope's eyes are brightened as she thinks of Jesus and realizes him as loving to the end; in him believing, she

rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory. To love, to trust, to hope, are all easy in the presence of a real living Christ; but if, like the disciples at midnight on the Galilean lake, we think him to be a mere spectre or apparition, we shall be afraid, and cry out for fear. Nothing will suffice a real Christian but a real Christ.

Next, the apostle John, in whom we note this outburst of devotion, was a man firmly assured of his possession of the blessings for which he praised the Lord. Doubt has no outbursts; its chill breath freezes all things. Oh for more assurance! Nowadays we hear Christian people talk in this way:—"Unto him that we hope has loved us, and that we humbly trust has washed us, and that we sometimes believe has made us kings, unto him be glory." Alas! the doxology is so feeble that it seems to imply as little glory as you like. The fact is, if you do not know that you have a blessing, you do not know whether you ought to be grateful for it or not; but when a man knows he has covenant mercies, that divine assurance which the Holy Ghost gives to Christians works in him a sacred enthusiasm of devotion to Jesus. He knows what he enjoys, and he blesses him from whom the enjoyment comes. I would have you, beloved, know beyond all doubt that Jesus is yours, so that you can say without hesitation, "He loved me and gave himself for me." You will never say, "Thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee," unless you are first established upon the point that Jesus loves you; for "we love him because he first loved us." John was certain that he was loved, and he was furthermore most clear that he was washed, and therefore he poured forth his soul in praise. Oh to know that you are washed from your sins in the blood of Jesus! Some professors seem half afraid to say that they are cleansed; but oh, my hearer, if you are a believer in Jesus, the case is clear, for "there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus"! "He that believeth in

him hath everlasting life." "He that believeth in him is justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses." "Ye are clean," saith Christ. "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit;" and "Ye are clean."

*"O how sweet to view the flowing
Of the Saviour's precious blood!
With divine assurance, knowing
He has made my peace with God."*

This well-grounded assurance will throw you into ecstasy, and it will not be long before the deep of your heart will well up with fresh springs of adoring love. Then shall you also praise the Lord with some such words as these: "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

Once more. I think we have brought out two points which are clear enough. John had realized his Master, and firmly grasped the blessings which his Master brought him; but he had also felt, and was feeling very strongly, his communion with all the saints. Notice the use of the plural pronoun. We should not have wondered if he had said, "Unto him that loved me, and washed me from my sins in his own blood." Somehow there would have been a loss of sweetness had the doxology been so worded, and it would have hardly sounded like John. John is the very mirror of love, and he cannot live alone, or rejoice in sacred benefits alone. John must have all the brotherhood round about him, and he must speak in their name, or he will be as one bereft of half himself. Beloved, it is well for you and me to use this "us" very often. There are times when it is better to say "me," but in general let us get away to the "us"; for has not our Lord taught us when we pray to say, "Our Father which

art in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; forgive us our trespasses," and so on? Jesus does not bid us say, "My Father." We do say it, and it is well to say it; but yet our usual prayers must run in the "Our Father" style; and our usual praises must be, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins." Let me ask you, beloved brethren, do you not love the Lord Jesus all the better and praise him all the more heartily because his grace and love are not given to you alone? Why, that blessed love has embraced your children, your neighbours, your fellow church-members, myriads who have gone before you, multitudes that are round about you, and an innumerable company who are coming after; and for this we ought to praise the gracious Lord with unbounded delight. It seems so much the more lovely,—this salvation, when we think of it, not as a cup of water of which one or two of us may drink, but as a well of water opened in the desert, ever flowing, ever giving life and deliverance and restoration to all who pass that way. "Unto him that loved us." Oh, my Lord, I bless thee for having loved me; but sometimes I think I could adore thee for loving my wife, for loving my children, and all these dear friends around me, even if I had no personal share in thy salvation. Sometimes this seems the greater part of it, not that I should share in thy compassion, but that all these poor sheep should be gathered into thy fold and kept safe by thee. The instinct of a Christian minister especially leads him to love Christ for loving the many; and I think the thought of every true worker for the Lord runs much in the same line. No man will burst out into such joyful adoration as we have now before us unless he has a great heart within him, full of love to all the brotherhood; and then, as he looks upon the multitude of the redeemed around about him, he will be prompted to cry with enthusiastic joy;

"To him that lov'd the souls of men,

*And wash'd us in his blood,
 To royal honours raised our head,
 And made us priests to God;
 "To him let every tongue be praise,
 And every heart be love!
 All grateful honours paid on earth,
 And nobler songs above!"*

Thus much upon the condition of heart which suggests these doxologies.

II. Secondly, let us look at THE OUTBURST ITSELF. It is a doxology, and as such does not stand alone: it is one of many. In the Book of the Revelation doxologies are frequent, and in the first few chapters they distinctly grow as the book advances. If you have your Bibles with you, as you ought to have, you will notice that in this first outburst only two things are ascribed to our Lord. "To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." Now turn to the fourth chapter at the ninth verse, and read, "Those living creatures give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne." Here we have three words of honour. Run on to verse eleven, and read the same. "Saying, thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power." The doxology has grown from two to three in each of these verses. Now turn to chapter v. 13. "And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." Here we have four praise-notes. Steadily but surely there is an advance. By the time we get to chapter vii. 12, we have reached the number of perfection, and may not look for more. "Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God

forever and ever. Amen." If you begin praising God you are bound to go on. The work engrosses the heart. It deepens and broadens like a rolling river. Praise is somewhat like an avalanche, which may begin with a snow-flake on the mountain moved by the wing of a bird, but that flake binds others to itself and becomes a rolling ball: this rolling ball gathers more snow about it till it is huge, immense; it crashes through a forest; it thunders down into the valley; it buries a village under its stupendous mass. Thus praise may begin with the tear of gratitude; anon the bosom swells with love; thankfulness rises to a song; it breaks forth into a shout; it mounts up to join the everlasting hallelujahs which surround the throne of the Eternal. What a mercy it is that God by his Spirit will give us greater capacities by-and-by than we have here! for if we continue to learn more and more of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge we shall be driven to sore straits if confined within the narrow and drowsy framework of this mortal body. This poor apparatus of tongue and mouth is already inadequate for our zeal.

*"Words are but air and tongues but clay,
But his compassions are divine."*

We want to get out of these fetters, and rise into something better adapted to the emotions of our spirit; I cannot emulate the songsters of Immanuel's land though I would gladly do so; but as Berridge says

*"Strip me of this house of clay,
And I will sing as loud as they."*

These doxologies occur again and again throughout this book as if to remind us to be frequent in praise; and they grow

as they proceed, to hint to us that we also should increase in thankfulness.

Now, this outburst carried within itself its own justification. Look at it closely and you perceive the reasons why, in this enthusiastic manner, John adores his Saviour. The first is, "Unto him that loved us." Time would fail me to speak long on this charming theme, so I will only notice briefly a few things. This love is in the present tense, for the passage may be read, "Unto him that loveth us." Our Lord in his glory still loves us as truly and as fervently as he did in the days of his flesh. He loved us before the world was, he loveth us now with all his heart, and he will love us when sun, and moon, and stars have all expired like sparks that die when the fire is quenched upon the hearth and men go to their beds. "He loveth us." He is himself the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, and his love is like himself. Dwell on the present character of it and be at this moment moved to holy praise.

He loved us first before he washed us: "Unto him that loved us, and washed us." Not "Unto him that washed us and loved us." This is one of the glories of Christ's love, that it comes to us while we are defiled with sin— yea, dead in sin. Christ's love does not only go out to us as washed, purified, and cleansed, but it went out towards us while we were yet foul and vile, and without anything in us that could be worthy of his love at all. He loved us, and then washed us: love is the fountain-head, the first source of blessing.

Think of this as being a recognizable description of our Lord— "Unto him that loved us." John wanted to point out the Lord Jesus Christ, and all he said was, "Unto him that loved us." He was sure nobody would make any mistake as to who was intended, for no one can be said to love us in comparison with Jesus. It is interesting to note that, as John is spoken of as "that disciple whom Jesus loved," so now the servant describes

the Master in something like the same terms: "Unto him that loved us." No one fails to recognize John or the Lord Jesus under their several love-names. When the apostle mentioned "him that loved us," there was no fear of men saying, "That is the man's friend, or father, or brother." No; there is no love like that of Jesus Christ: he bears the palm for love; yea, in the presence of his love all other love is eclipsed, even as the sun conceals the stars by his unrivalled brightness.

Again, the word "him that loved us," seems as if it described all that Christ did for us, or, at least, it mentions first the grandest thing he ever did, in which all the rest is wrapped up. It is not, "Unto him that took our nature; unto him that set us a glorious example; unto him that intercedes for us but, "Unto him that loved us," as if that one thing comprehended all, as indeed it does.

He loves us: this is matter for admiration and amazement. Oh, my brethren, this is an abyss of wonder to me! I can understand that Jesus pities us; I can very well understand that he has compassion on us; but that the Lord of glory loves us is a deep, great, heavenly thought, which my finite mind can hardly hold. Come, brother, and drink of this wine on the lees, well refined. Jesus loves you. Grasp that. You know what the word means in some little degree according to human measurements, but the infinite Son of God loved you of old, and he loves you now! His heart is knit with your heart, and he cannot be happy unless you are happy.

Remember, he loves you with his own love according to his own nature. Therefore he has for you an infinite love altogether immeasurable. It is also like himself, immutable; and can never know a change. The emperor Augustus was noted for his faithfulness to his friends, whom he was slow in choosing. He used to say, "Late ere I love, long ere I leave." Our blessed Lord loved us early, but he never leaves us. Has he not said, "I will never

leave thee, nor forsake thee”? The love of Jesus is a pure, perfect, and divine love: a love whose heights and depths none can measure. His nature is eternal and undying, and such is his love. He could not love you more; he will never love you less. With all his heart and soul and mind and strength he loves you. Come; is not that a grand excuse, if excuse is wanted, for often lifting up our hearts and voices in hearty song unto the Lord? Why should we not seven times a day exult before him, saying, “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen”? Oh for new crowns for his blessed brow! Oh for new songs for his love-gifts ever new! Praise him! Praise him, all earth and heaven!

Then the apostle passes on to the second reason why he should thus magnify the Lord Jesus by saying, “And washed us from our sins in his own blood.” “Washed us.” Then we were foul; and he loved us though we were unclean. He washed us who had been more defiled than any. How could he condescend so far as to wash us? Would he have anything to do with such filthiness as ours? Would that sublime holiness of his come into contact with the abominable guilt of our nature and our practice? Yes, he loved us so much that he washed us from our sins, black as they were. He did it effectually, too: he did not try to wash us, but he actually and completely washed us from our sins.” The stains were deep and damnable; they seemed indelible, but he has “washed us from our sins.” No spot remains, though we were black as midnight. “Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow,” has been realized by every believer here. But think of how he washed us— “with his own blood.” Men are chary of their own blood, for it is their life; yet will brave ones pour it out for their country or for some worthy object; but Jesus shed his blood for such unworthy ones as we are, that he

might by his atonement for ever put away the iniquity of his people. At what a cost was this cleansing provided! Too great a cost I had almost said. Have you never felt at times as if, had you been there and seen the Lord of glory about to bleed to death for you, you would have said, “No, my Lord, the price is too great to pay for such a one as I am”? But he has done it; brethren, his sin-atonement work is finished for ever: Jesus has bled, and he has washed us, and we are clean beyond fear of future defilement. Shall he not have glory for this? Will we not wish him dominion for this?

*“Worthy is he that once was slain,
The Prince of Peace that groan’d and died;
Worthy to rise, and live, and reign
At his Almighty Father’s side.”*

Does not this doxology carry its justification in its own bowels? Who can refuse to praise at the remembrance of such grace as this?

Nor is this all. The Lord that loved us would do nothing by halves, and therefore when he washed us in his own blood, he “made us kings.” What is that? Are we kings this morning? We do not feel our crowns as yet, nor perhaps grasp our sceptres as we might, but the Lord has made us a royal priesthood. We reign over our own selves, and that is a dominion which is hard to gain, indeed, impossible without grace. We walk like kings among the sons of men, honoured before the Lord and his holy angels— the peerage of eternity. Our thoughts, our aims, our hopes, and our longings are all of a nobler kind than those of the mere carnal man. Ours is a nature of a higher order than theirs, since we have been born again of the Spirit. Men know us not because they know not our Lord; but we have a heritage they have not, and we have prepared for us a crown of life

which fadeth not away. The Lord has made us kings and endowed us with power before his presence, yea he has made us rich since all things are ours. We read of the peculiar treasures of kings, and we have a choice wealth of grace. He has made us even now among the sons of men to possess the earth and to delight ourselves in the abundance of peace.

Furthermore our Lord has made us priests. Certain men impiously set up to be priests above the rest of the Lord's people. As Korah, Dathan, and Abiram are they, and they had need fear lest they and their evil system should go down into the pit. Whoever they may be, all the people of God are priests. Every man that believes in Jesus Christ is from that moment a priest, though he be neither shaven nor shorn, nor bedecked in peculiar array. To the true believer his common garments are vestments, every meal is a sacrament, every act is a sacrifice. If we live as we should live, our houses are temples, our hearts are altars, our lives are an oblation. The bells upon our horses are holiness unto the Lord, and our common pots are as the bowls before the altar. It is the sanctification of the Holy Spirit which gives men a special character, so that they are the priesthood of the universe. The world is dumb, and we must speak for it: the whole universe is as a great organ, but it is silent; we place our fingers on the keys, and the music rises towards heaven. We are to be priests for all mankind. Wherever we go we are to teach men, and to intercede with God for them. In prayer and praise we are to offer up acceptable oblations, and we are ourselves to be living sacrifices, acceptable unto God by Jesus Christ our Lord. Oh, what dignity is this! How you and I are bound to serve God! Peter Martyr told Queen Elizabeth: "Kings and queens are more bound to obey God than any other persons; first as God's creatures, and secondly as his servants in office." This applies to us also. If common men are bound to

serve God how much more those whom he has made kings and priests unto his name!

What does the doxology say? "To him be glory and dominion." First, "To him be glory." Oh, give him glory, my beloved, this morning! Do I address any that have never yet accepted Christ's salvation? Accept it now, and thus give your Saviour glory. Have you never trusted Jesus to save you? The best, the only thing you can do to give him glory is to trust him now, sinner as you are, that he may remove your transgressions. Are you saved? Then, dear brother, give him glory by speaking well of his name, and by perpetual adoration. Glorify him in your songs, glorify him in your lives. Behave yourselves as his disciples should do, and may his Spirit help you.

But the doxology also ascribes to him dominion. My heart longs for Jesus to have dominion. I wish he might get dominion over some poor heart this morning which has hitherto been in rebellion against him! Yield thee, rebel! Yield thee to thy Sovereign and Saviour! "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." To him be dominion over hearts that have never submitted to him; and assuredly to him be fullest dominion over hearts that love him. Reign, my Lord, reign in my bosom more and more; cast out every enemy and every rival; reign supreme, and reign eternally. Set up thy throne also more and more conspicuously in the hearts and lives of all who call themselves Christians. O my brethren, ought it not to be so? Is it not clear to you that since he has loved and washed us he should have dominion over us? Ah! let him have dominion over the wide, wide world, till they that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him, and his enemies shall lick the dust. Reign for ever, King of kings and Lord of lords.

Then it is added, let him have glory and dominion "for ever and ever." I suppose we shall have some gentlemen coming up

to prove that “for ever and ever” only means for a time. They tell us that everlasting punishment means only for a time, and, of course, everlasting life must mean just the same, and this praise must also have a limit. I mean not so, nor do you, beloved. I pray that our Lord may have endless glory, eternal dominion. I pray that Christ’s power and dominion may be over this generation, and the next, and the next, until he cometh, and then that it may be said, “The Lord shall reign for ever and ever.” Hallelujah! As long as there is wing of angel or song of man; as long as God himself shall live, may the Lord Jesus Christ that loved us and washed us have glory and dominion.

Now we have come to the last word of the text. It finishes up with “Amen.” “For ever and ever. Amen.” Can you heartily say “Amen” to this? Do you wish Christ to have glory and dominion for ever and ever? If you know he loved you, I am sure you do; if you know he washed you, I am sure you do. Now let our beating hearts in solemn silence say, “Amen”; and when we have done that, do you think you could join with one voice with me and say it out aloud, like thunder? Now, “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen;” and “Amen” yet again. (Here the great congregation joined aloud with the preacher.) The prayers of David the son of Jesse were ended when he came to that, and so may ours be, and so may this morning’s service be. God bless you through his adorable Son.

Amen and Amen.

TWO LOVED AND LAVED

SERMON GIVEN ON FEBRUARY 22, 1891

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 1:5, 6

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 37

*“Unto him that loved us, and washed us from
our sins in his own blood, and hath made us
kings and priests unto God and his Father;
to him be glory and dominion for ever and
ever. Amen.”*

REVELATION 1:5-6

JOHN was the beloved disciple, the choicest spirit of the twelve, the one nearest to the heart of Christ. Not only was he that disciple whom Jesus loved, but he was full of love to his Lord in return. John leaned his head on Christ's bosom. All his soul seemed to be aflame with affection towards Christ. “We love him, because he first loved us,” are words which come with

great power from such a heart; they were so wonderfully true in his own experience. But now, when he comes to sing a psalm of praise to his Lord, he does not mention his love to his Master. He dwells not on that; for his confidence lies deeper than anything in himself, even in the love of the Son of God to him. Would you not wish to be like him? Then “keep yourselves in the love of God,” as, on the opposite page of your Bible, you read in the Epistle of Jude. Meditate much on your Master, and on your Master’s love; dwell with Christ, and whether you realize your love to him or not, drink in daily the sweetness of his wondrous love to you. Live on that, and often let your heart lift up a song of praise because of it. Then shall the blessing of Benjamin be yours: “The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him; and the Lord shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders.”

This verse seems to me to be fit to be the song of heaven. It is indeed the epitome of all those choral symphonies with which redeemed spirits circle the throne of our great Lord and King. John, in vision, had caught glimpses of the glory-land, and had heard the great multitude which no man can number raise their hallelujahs, as they cast their crowns before him that sat upon the throne; and as the refrain of a song hums itself over again even after the singer has ceased, John, when he began to write this book, seems to have remembered the chorus of those who “came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” I think that I hear them now while we are listening here; and this is the grand chorale of the skies: “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.” We, in feebler strains, fervently add our “Amen.”

Would you not wish to be in heaven when your life on

earth is over? The time will come when you must die; would you not desire to have a good hope of entering then into the felicities of the perfected ones? I am sure you would; but if you are at last to be numbered amongst the redeemed host on high, you must here learn their song. You cannot be admitted into the choirs above without having practised and rehearsed their music here below. Therefore you must think much and believe much concerning Christ's love to his chosen, and how he showed it in washing us from our sins in his own blood. He is coming again; the next verse tells us, "Behold, he cometh with clouds." When he shall come, and earth shall rock and reel, and the skies shall shrivel up like worn-out parchment, and the stars shall fall like fig-leaves from the trees; in that day you will wish to be found at the right hand of the King, and to cry with rapture, "Welcome, welcome, Son of God!" But you cannot be there unless you first know him as the Christ who hath loved you, and washed you from your sins in his own blood. I pray, therefore, that while I talk feebly enough myself, God's divine power may go with the word, that you who know the Redeemer's love may know it better, and feel your hearts swell with glad emotion, till you are ready to stand up and shout, "Glory and majesty, dominion and power be unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood!" I pray, too, that others who are strangers to the blood-washing, and have never yet known the power of Christ's atoning sacrifice, may say, "By the grace of God, we also will know something of that love, if it is to be known, and we will pray that in us also that wondrous washing may take place, that we also may be clean through Jesus' blood, and stand among the ransomed throng, to shout his praises for ever and ever."

Notice very specially that the exile of Patmos, having known much of Christ, and lived in his presence for many years, sings of love as manifested in the washing away of sins.

Some years before, he had written, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that marvellous word, "God is love;" but now, as the end of his life approaches, all love seems for him to be summed up in the blood-washing. This is the climax and summit of the love of Christ. I delight to dwell on this glorious theme. They tell me of God in nature, and speak of the warbling of birds and the beauties of the summer as revelations of the love of God, as doubtless they are. I read of the matchless life of Christ, and I am charmed with its beauties and its blessedness; but when I would speak of the fulness of his love, I can find nothing to express it but the blood which he shed on Calvary. It is a wonderful work which that blood-shedding accomplishes in taking away our sins; for that they are taken away at once and for ever when we trust in the Crucified, is a blessed truth about which the Word of God leaves no manner of doubt. I do not know whether "washed" is the best word to express the meaning of the text. We need something more than the mere removal of outside sin. If, however, this idea is to be kept, I prefer the word "laved", which gives us a suitable expression of the thought, and also carries us back to the laver used in the typical ordinances of the Tabernacle and Temple of old. The text maybe read, "Unto him that loved us, and laved us from our sins in his own blood." If we prefer it, we may render our song as the Revised Version has it, with a deeper shade of meaning, "Unto him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood," and with adoring hearts may add, "to him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever." In his great love he laves away the defilement of our sins, and then looses us from the chains that those sins had thrown around our life.

*"Oh, for this love, let rocks and hills
Their lasting silence break,
And all harmonious human tongues*

The Saviour's praises speak!"

I shall have only two things to talk about on this occasion. First, let us think of the love of Jesus in the particular way mentioned in the text, as shown in his washing us from our sins in his own blood; and secondly, when we have meditated on his love, let us glorify him for it. I will not attempt to take the whole of verse six; that would be too much for one sermon.

I. First, LET US THINK OF THE LOVE OF JESUS, and as we muse upon it, may the fire burn in our souls! May we be raised out of ourselves, and be seated in the heavenlies, "because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us"! Our subject at this time is — The love of Christ, as shown in his washing us from our sins in his own blood.

Upon which I remark, first, that he loved us freely. That is clear, if you reflect that he did not love us because we had no sin: if that had been the case, he would not have needed to have washed us in his own blood. He did not love us because we were righteous, because we were obedient, because we had neither omitted any duty nor committed any offence. No; but he saw us foul with sin, and yet he loved us. We are described in Scripture sometimes as crimson, and again as scarlet with sin. These are glaring colours, and sin is a glaring, staring thing, that must be seen. God has seen it; God abhors it. But though he saw it, he loved us: "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it." What wondrous love it is, that Christ should love a thief! Yet he did, and took a thief to be the first to enter his kingdom with him. What amazing condescension that Christ should love an outcast! Yet there was one who loved him much, because she had been forgiven much. How marvellous that Christ should love a swearer! Yet he loved Peter, whose swearing was of the worst kind, for he denied his Master with

an oath. 'Twas passing strange that Christ should love a persecutor! Yet he loved Saul of Tarsus, who was exceedingly mad against his people. Is not this the greatest marvel of all, that he should love you, and that he should love me; that he has loved us, though we have been utterly unworthy of his love; full of sin, and keeping to the sin; persevering in it; refusing to turn from it when bidden to repent; rejecting Christ and all his love; and year after year continuing with a high hand to rebel against God? Yet he loved us while we were dead in trespasses and sins, loved us out of free, rich, sovereign grace; not because we were lovely, but because he is loving; not because we were gracious, but because he is full of grace. You see, the text does not say that he washed us and loved us; as if from some high sense of duty he took away our sin, and then loved us when we were clean. No, it is not "laved and loved", it is "loved and laved." The love is first, and because he loved us in our sins, and in spite of them, he cleanses them all away. Tell out this glorious gospel, all ye who know the glad tidings! Let men and angels hear it again and again! He loved us while our sin was yet upon us, and therefore he washed us, and made us white through his own blood. It is love most freely given. When I think of it, I feel that I can join with the children, and say—

*"Oh, if there's only one song I can sing
When in his beauty I see the great King,
This shall my song in eternity be—
'Oh, what a wonder that Jesus loves me!'"*

As I think of Christ's love, I say, next, he loved us condescendingly. He loved us, "and washed us." Does God take to washing black sinners white? That he should create, I understand; that he should destroy, I also understand; but that he should wash and cleanse those who have made themselves foul

with sin, is marvellous. God is so full of power that, if a thing is broken, it is never worth his while to mend it. It is the poverty of our resources that compels us to put up with defiled and broken things, and make them better; but he could, with a word, or without a word, make another race of creatures, and leave sinful men to die, if he would. Yet he loved us, so that he stooped to wash us from our defilement. Oh, when you see the Christ of God kneeling down, girding himself with a towel, like a slave, and bringing forth the ewer and the basin; when you see him pouring water on his disciples' feet, then taking foot after foot with his own dear hands, and washing them, you see a great sight of love! But when he opens his own side, when he gives his hands and feet to be sacred fountains of blood, and we are cleansed through his death and agony, this is compassion like a God; this is a sight the like of which heaven and earth have never seen. What love must he have to sinful men, that he should stoop so low as this! The Maker of heaven and earth washing filthy hearts and sinful souls! It almost surpasses human thought; yet it is most certainly true. Glory be unto his name! Well may we sing praises "unto him that loved us, and washed us." It is amazing mercy that Christ should ever deal with sin, except to punish it. That he should ever take it on himself that he might remove it from us, is a thing that we shall never fully understand, even in glory itself. Condescending love indeed it was that loved us, and washed us.

*"On such love, my soul, still ponder,
Love so great, so rich, so free;
Say, whilst lost in holy wonder,
Why, O Lord, such love to me?
Hallelujah,
Grace shall reign eternally."*

But, next, he loved us in a holy manner. The love of Christ was as holy as everything else about him. We do not read that he loved us, and therefore winked at our sinfulness. Oh, no; that could never be! The love of Christ never becomes an unholy thing. It never panders to our lust, nor does it cover up our iniquity so that it shall not be punished. He loved us, but because he loved us he must wash us. He could not take us to heaven unwashed. A man cannot remain a sinner, and be at peace with God. Even the Almighty could not make us happy, and let us remain in sin. You cannot be at rest till you are right with God, and you cannot be right with God till you give up evil. He is a holy God; and the love of Christ, mighty as it is, cannot bless you without washing you. You drunkards must give up the cup. You that are dishonest must become honest. You that are unchaste must be rendered pure. You that are selfish must become loving. You that are hot-tempered must be made meek and lowly. It must be done. There is no other way by which you can be saved. Even he that loves you can only bless you thus. You must be washed. Holiness requires it. Oh, what a love it is that will not leave us foul, but loves us out of our sins! Christ “loved us, and washed us.” This, indeed, is holy love.

*“Love that condemns the sinner’s sin,
Yet, in condemning, pardon seals;
That saves from righteous wrath, and yet
In saving, righteousness reveals.”*

Christ’s love is seen, next, in that he loved us at a costly rate; he hath washed us from our sins “in his own blood.” Ah, brethren! I wish that I had a tongue that could speak of this wondrous work as it deserves to be spoken of; but human lips are slow and stammering when they approach this theme. Who

can measure or express the love which proves itself by the outpoured blood of the Son of God? Yet this is the gift his love hath bestowed upon us. By “his own blood” I understand not merely the actual blood of his body, but the whole of his griefs and woes and sacrificial death; his giving up himself instead of us, to bear the righteous wrath of God, justly our due. It means just that. There could be no washing for us except he should be in a bloody sweat. There was no washing us unless there was—

*“A fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins.”*

There was no making us clean, except by his coming into contact with human sin, and that meant to him what the fire meant to the bullock on the altar. It meant being burnt up with a divine wrath, on account of human sin— wrath most just, most true; for God cannot bear iniquity: it is not right that he should do otherwise than hate it with all the infinite hate of his righteous soul. Christ has washed us “in his own blood.” The priests could only cleanse with blood of bulls and goats; but he has washed us from our sins “in his own blood.” Men are willing enough to shed the blood of others. How readily they will enter upon war! But Christ was willing to shed his own blood, to pour out his soul unto death, that we might be saved. No language can ever fully set forth this marvellous mystery; and as the mighty master of painting threw a veil over a face that he never could depict, so would I leave unspoken the great marvel of Christ’s washing us with his own blood. But let us, who know it to be true in our own experience, lift a glad song in our hearts—

*“To him that loved the souls of men,
And wash’d us in his blood;*

*To royal honours raised our head,
And made us priests to God."*

We cannot meditate on the love of Christ without saying that he loved us effectually. The text says that Christ "loved us, and washed us from our sins"; or, "loosed us from our sins." You that believe in Christ are washed from all your sins. There is no sin remaining upon you now in the matter of guilt before God. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died." You are justified, through Christ, from every sin. You are clean every whit if you have believed in him. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." But we can go further than this, and join with the saints in heaven in saying — "He hath loosed us from our sins;" that is, from the dominion of sin. When Christ pardons sin he kills it, he crucifies it; and crucifixion, you know, means death; but it is a lingering death; and a crucified man lives in pain, without power to work or act; he suffers and lingers. So is it with sin in the believer. It is nailed up, crucified with Christ. You cannot do now what your evil nature suggests to you. A respectable man whom I know said that the other night he was driving along with his old horse. Another man came through the fog, and their horses touched each other; "but", said he, "we passed very civilly." But there came along one who looked like a gentleman, driving rather fast; he drove into the poor man's cart, and instead of making any apology, he cut him across the face with his whip. My friend is a decided Christian, yet he said, "I felt that the old man was in me, and I wanted to give him a cut of my whip in return; but I did not. When I got home I said, 'The old man is not dead.' If he had been dead, I should not have felt even a momentary passion. I kept him down, but I felt very angry, and I said to myself, 'Ah! though you have been a Christian a great many years, the old man is still alive.'" So he is every one of us.

He lies like a sneak in the corner; but the day shall come when there shall be no remains of the evil, no trace of sin left in us, and in heaven we shall sing, “He hath loosed us from our sins in his own blood. He has taken the last relic of sin away— every tendency to evil, every possibility of evil;” for it is written, “They are without fault before the throne of God,” and no sin shall ever come into their hearts again. Glory be to his name that such a sanctification as this is possible, and that we shall yet have to sing of it as perfected! Praise to his holy name for the love which ends in such bliss! Hallelujah! He looseth us from the chains of sin, that he may bind us with the bonds of love. This is royal liberty.

*“Drawn by such cords, we onward move,
Till round thy throne we meet,
And, captives in the chains of love,
Embrace our Conqueror’s feet.”*

Once more, this love of Christ is perpetual: he loves us still. Turning to the Revised Version we do not read, “Unto him that loved us,” but “Unto him that loveth us.” I like that. Jesus loves me still. He did not finish his love by his death. He loves you still. When he was poor on earth, and despised and rejected of men, he loved you; and now that a royal diadem adorns his blessed brow, and all angels fall down and worship him, he loves you still, and he will always love you. You who believe in him are his pride, his Hephzi-bah, his delight is in you. You can hardly love yourself, can you? When you see your own face in the glass of God’s law, is there any beauty there? Did you ever stand and spiritually admire yourself? If you did, you were a fool. If you truly know your own heart, you cannot find there aught to delight in. You blush. You hide your face for shame. But Christ loves you. “I am black,” said the spouse. She felt that

she was very black; but when she looked to her Beloved, and saw what he thought of her, she added, "but comely." And we can appropriate her language. In myself, "as the tents of Kedar, smoke-dried by the Bedouin, yet am I by grace as the curtains of Solomon, bedight with gold lace and all the embroidery of the workman's needle. I am both— to myself a thing undone, but in him washed and saved; unlovely, but by him beloved." Oh, it makes my heart beat within me! I feel as if I could leap into heaven when I think "He loves me! He loves me! He loved me when he died for me: he liveth for me, and he loves me still."

*"Now though he reigns exalted high,
His love is still as great;
Well he remembers Calvary,
Nor let his saints forget."*

If you feel as I do, you will go with me into the other part of the subject: "To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

II. So, in the second place, LET US GLORIFY THIS LOVING, LIVING SAVIOUR. If we were to do it fitly, we should want to have music such as Handel wrote; and when we should sing of it, if we had all of us perfect voices, we should go home and say, "Ah! it was poor praise compared with what he deserves." So we will not try any singing, but will talk about something practical.

If we are to glorify Christ, we must gladly confess his name. If you have never acknowledged him and confessed him, begin now, and say, "Unto him that loved me, and washed me from my sins in his own blood; to him be glory." If you really mean that, you are bound to come out and own that you are his disciple. You cannot say, "To him be glory," and then hide yourself

away, and never seek to bring glory to his name by openly declaring that he is your Lord and Master. Some of you are very like a mouse behind the wainscot. You are in the Lord's house, but you are not known as one of the family: sometimes you give a little squeak in your hiding-place, and sometimes come out at night, as the mouse does, to pick up a crumb or two, without being seen. Is this worthy of yourself? Is it worthy of your Lord and Master? You are a Christian, you say, but you do not want to be known to be a Christian. A soldier in the Lord's army, but you never put on your regimentals! You like always to be in mufti. You are afraid lest anybody should know that you are a soldier! If a man behaved like that in the British army, they would drum him out of the regiment. What would be the good of such a fellow? If he is ashamed of her Majesty's uniform, let him be gone. He is not loyal to his sovereign. I am not going to condemn you who have never come out and owned yourselves followers of Christ: I wish that you would hold a little court, and condemn yourself; and that instead of my drumming you out, you would drum yourself out, and say, "I will not stay any longer in a position where I can be talked to like that. Glory be to him who hath loved me, and washed me in his own blood! I will openly confess him. I will unite myself with his people. I will say, 'I am his, and he is mine.'" Remember that there is no salvation promised to an unconfessed faith. I boldly put it according to the Word of God. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." There is no question that confession is here required. And again it is clearly stated, "He that believeth and is baptized"—which is the confession of him that Christ requires—"shall be saved"; and though confession with the mouth and baptism cannot save, yet the faith to which the promise is made is a faith that dares to confess and come out. "Then, I should have to bear a lot of

ridicule," says one. And are you afraid to follow your Master for fear of ridicule? Remember what, for love of you, he bore. Think what scorn from Pharisees, and hatred and malice from the rulers of the Jews, Christ cheerfully accepted that lie might save you. He shirked not the heavy cross for you; will you not take that little cross for him? He shed his blood to cleanse; and it is not likely that you will ever be called to shed your blood for him. Yet many have done this, and counted it all gladness. Oh, by the martyrs who dared to die for Jesus— three of them on this very spot where we are meeting now, many of them across the water in Smithfield— I beseech you, if you love him that loved you and washed you from your sins in his own blood, to give him at least the glory which would come of a confession that you are saved by him.

*"It passeth telling, that dear love of thine,
My Jesus, Saviour; yet these lips of mine
Would fain proclaim to sinners, far and near,
A love which can remove all guilty fear,
And love beget."*

Next, if we really do wish to glorify him, we must shun all sin. A man cannot say, "Unto him that loved me, and washed me from my sins be glory," and then go off to the ale-bench, and drink with the drunkard. You dare not say, "Unto him be glory," and then, as a professed Christian, go and do a dishonest deed, or speak a lie, or do that which would be discreditable to yourself, and would bring dishonour on his dear name. If he washed me from my sin with his blood, I must hate sin. It murdered my Lord. It cost him his life to save me from it. How, then, can I, how dare I, toy with it? "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" How shall we that are washed in his blood, go and stain our garments again, and play with iniquity and

trifle with transgression? Remember that you are “loosed” from sin. It no longer holds you captive; the chains are dissolved by the blood of atonement. Why, then, should you go about as if you were in bondage? We shall never have done with sin while we are here; but that is no reason why we should be defiled by it; for the fountain wherein we were washed at first is always open. As the spring of love never ceases to flow, so the efficacy of the blood is never lost. “The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” Since death has no more dominion over Christ, sin need have no more dominion over us. “It is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy,” and I beseech you to obey the exhortation; for then, and then only, will you bring glory to him who washed you from your sins in his own blood.

*“Blest be thy love, dear Lord,
That taught us this sweet way,
Only to love thee for thyself,
And for that love obey.”*

Again, if we truly say, “To him be glory and dominion,” then we must give him dominion over ourselves. Each man is a little empire of three kingdoms— body, soul, and spirit— and it should be a united kingdom. Make Christ king of it all. Do not allow any branch of those three kingdoms to set up for itself a distinct rule; put them all under the sway of your one King. My eyes must not look on vanity; my tongue must not talk uncleanness; my hands must not minister to evil; my feet must not carry me where I should not go; my heart must not wander; my thoughts must not go astray; my imagination must not find pleasure in evil. Every faculty of my nature ought to be given “unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins.” Every ability and possibility, every growth and progress made in knowledge and learning, must be laid at Jesus’ feet. Say, “To him be glory

and dominion,” and then make a full surrender of yourself to his sway. So many in these days seem only to want the salvation of Christ without the Christ who gives the salvation. Both go together. He must be Lord of the forgiven soul. He only washes those who will enter his kingdom, and come under his government. Are we not glad to proclaim him King? Reign, blessed Jesus, reign! Reign over my body, soul, and spirit; completely reign. Bring every thought into captivity to thy holy love. Is not that what you are now saying, you that have been washed in his blood?

*“Lord, thou hast won, at length I yield;
My heart, by mighty grace compell’d,
Surrenders all to thee;
Against thy terrors long I strove,
But who can stand against thy love?
Love conquers even me.”*

And then, next, if we say, “To him be glory and dominion,” we must seek to bring others under his sway. There is some way in which every one of us can do it. Dear brothers and sisters, if you have yielded yourselves to Christ, do not be satisfied till you see your children saved. Begin at home; do not be content till the boys and girls all belong to Christ. Then look after your neighbours. You that are large employers, care for the men who work for you. Do not treat them as “hands”; look at them as souls, and regard them as beings made in God’s image and for his praise. Not only talk, but act. When they are in need, help them. Succour them, that you may by any means draw them to think of their souls, and to desire and pray that they also may be washed from their sins in Christ’s own blood. O beloved, if he is to have dominion, let us each one win a little bit for him! You cannot convert idolatrous China, or heathen India, or the dark

continent of Africa. These big things are too much for any one of us; but there is a little kingdom for each one of us to win for Christ, a little bit committed to us, that we may go and conquer it, and fulfil the desire expressed in the text: "To him be glory and dominion." Watch for souls. Be on the look-out for new ways of serving the Master. As African travellers now seem each very eager to be the first to make a treaty with certain chieftains, that their territory may be annexed to this kingdom or that, so seek to win new conquests for Christ, and attach people to his cause, before they are hopelessly lost to the devil. Perhaps the friend sitting next to you at this service does not yet know the Lord. Could you not have a word with that person before you leave the building? Perhaps, through your message, that heart will be won for Christ.

If we really wish that Christ should have glory and dominion because he has washed us from our sins in his blood, we must do nothing to dishonour him ourselves, and we shall do anything sooner than see his blessed gospel and his holy name dishonoured by others. Oh, I would sooner be accounted as the offscouring of all things than have any part with those who reject or dim the gospel of my Lord and Master! I would sooner be accounted the greatest bigot on earth, and the most stupid fool that ever breathed, than enter into any partnership or brotherhood with those who keep back the cross of Christ, or cast a slur upon the inspiration of holy Scripture. Shall I, who am washed from my sin in the blood of Christ, have any fellowship with those who speak of this highest exhibition of my Lord's love as "the doctrine of the shambles"? or with one who "hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing"? This were a poor return for the love that bled and died to save me; any dishonour is better than that. When Queen Elizabeth came to a miry place in one of her progresses, you remember

how Sir Walter Raleigh, without a moment's thought, took off his new cloak, which had cost him much, and spread it in the way, that her majesty might walk over it. Havel any honour? Have I any reputation? Have I any name? I will throw it down. Let it go on the miry place that my Lord may tread on it, and no mire may come on him. May we all, who know that we are loosed from our sins, get into just that spirit which, whenever men are finding fault with the gospel, will say, "Here, find fault with me; turn all your attention to me; only spare my Lord." Christ is set in the pillory, and men are pelting him. He is the true lover of Christ who comes up to the pillory, and stands in front of him, ready to take the blows aimed at his Lord; who drinks in so much, of the character of Christ that he can truly use that language which is first employed with reference to the zeal of Christ himself: "The reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me." He is not honoured whom men honour. He is honoured who is made a laughing-stock for Christ's sake. "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven." Get this spirit into you: "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins, be glory and dominion." "There", said a dying man, who was in a ditch when the great Emperor Napoleon rode by, and he heard a shout of victory, "let me die: the Emperor has conquered." And oh! may not you and I be well content to be blotted out and forgotten, so long as Christ the King shall come to his own again? He soon shall triumph. With the ear of faith you may almost hear his chariot-wheels. He cometh! He cometh quickly; and happy shall he be in that day who now has been despised lest Christ should be dishonoured! With what joy shall we meet our Lord when he takes to himself his great power and reigns! With what rapture shall we fall at his

feet if we have been true to him and to his truth! For his love is founded on his truth, and triumphs through it.

I have done when I have added this one thing more. Unto him that loved and laved us, let us give all glory and dominion; but if we would do that, we must not be cold and indifferent about holy things. You know what kind of hearers some people are. You may say what you will to them, but they are never moved. I believe that if a half-hundred-weight of dynamite were put under the seat, it would hardly move them. They are so solid, so cold. Can I hear of that dear name, and never catch the sacred fire? Can I think of Calvary, and still my heart remain cold and chill? Can I behold that marred face, that "sacred head once wounded", and my soul not thrill with gratitude? Can I see those cruel nails and that terrible thorn-crown; can I taste the vinegar, and handle the sponge, and yet never feel one warm affection within my spirit? God forbid! Oh, my Saviour, let my heart rejoice or ache, but let it not be hard and cold! Let me adore thee with every power of my redeemed manhood all aglow with holy fervour.

*"But ah! how faint our praises rise!
Sure, 'tis the wonder of the skies
That we, who share his richest love,
So cold and unconcern'd should prove."*

Surely, if "we have known and believed the love that God hath to us," we shall find some answering spark of affection to him in our hearts. If we mean to give him the glory and dominion, we must give him our love and devotion. Our love must ever be as the echo to his. It cannot be that we can receive such abounding, overflowing bounty, and remain indifferent to the Giver. His interests must surely be our chief concern. We must be moved to seek first the things which concern him who hath

bestowed on us such wonderful grace. Wake up, dear brethren, if you are getting into a cold state! Some religion seems to be altogether a matter of the drum; that will not do: but there are occasions when the drum may rightly be used. There are seasons when the cornet, harp, dulcimer, and all kinds of music ought to be heard. There are times for the holy dance and the joyous song. There are periods when enthusiasm must rule the hour, when the spirit must feel that she is all wing, that she mounts and soars, and whether in the body or out of the body, she cannot tell. May such a moment as that be yours just now! Blessed be the name of the Lord for ever! To him be glory and dominion! Hallelujah! Let us all say it. Let us all feel it. Let us all live it.

Amen, and Amen!

THREE
HE COMETH WITH CLOUDS

SERMON GIVEN ON OCTOBER 27, 1887

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 1:7

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 33

*“Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye
shall see him, and they also which pierced
him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail
because of him. Even so, Amen.”*

REVELATION 1:7.

IN reading the chapter we observed how the beloved John saluted the seven churches in Asia with, “Grace and peace be unto you.” Blessed men scatter blessings. When the benediction of God rests on us we pour out benedictions upon others.

From benediction John’s gracious heart rose into adoration of the great King of Saints. As our hymn puts it, “The holy to

the holiest leads." They that are good at blessing men will be quick at blessing God.

It is a wonderful doxology which John has given us: "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." I like the Revised Version for its alliteration in this case, although I cannot prefer it for other reasons. It runs thus: "Unto him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood." Truly our Redeemer has loosed us from sin; but the mention of his blood suggests washing rather than loosing. We can keep the alliteration and yet retain the meaning of cleansing if we read the passage, "Unto him that loved us, and laved us." Loved us, and laved us: carry those two words home with you: let them lie upon your tongue to sweeten your breath for prayer and praise. "Unto him that loved us, and laved us, be glory and dominion for ever and ever."

Then John tells of the dignity which the Lord hath put upon us in making us kings and priests, and from this he ascribes royalty and dominion unto the Lord himself. John had been extolling the Great King, whom he calls, "The Prince of the kings of the earth." Such indeed he was, and is, and is to be. When John had touched upon that royalty which is natural to our divine Lord, and that dominion which has come to him by conquest, and by the gift of the Father as the reward of all his travail, he then went on to note that he has "made Us kings," Our Lord's royalty he diffuses among his redeemed. We praise him because he is in himself a king, and next, because he is a king-maker, the fountain of honour and majesty. He has not only enough of royalty for himself, but he hands a measure of his dignity to his people. He makes kings out of such common stuff as he finds in us poor sinners. Shall we not adore him for this? Shall we not cast our crowns at his feet? He gave our

crowns to us, shall we not give them to him? "To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." King by thy divine nature! King by filial right! King-maker, lifting up the beggar from the dunghill to set him among princes! King of kings by the unanimous love of all thy crowned ones! Thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise! Reign thou for ever and ever! Unto thee be hosannas of welcome and hallelujahs of praise. Lord of the earth and heaven, let all things that be, or ever shall be, render unto thee all glory in the highest degree. Brethren, do not your souls take fire as you think of the praises of Immanuel? Fain would I fill the universe with his praise. Oh for a thousand tongues to sing the glories of the Lord Jesus! If the Spirit who dictated the words of John has taken possession of our spirits, we shall find adoration to be our highest delight. Never are we so near to heaven as when we are absorbed in the worship of Jesus, our Lord and God. Oh, that I could now adore him as I shall do when, delivered from this encumbering body, my soul shall behold him in the fulness of his glory!

It would seem from the chapter that the adoration of John was increased by his expectation of the Lord's second coming; for he cries, "Behold, he cometh with clouds." His adoration awoke his expectation, which all the while was lying in his soul as an element of that vehement heat of reverent love which he poured forth in his doxology. "Behold, he cometh," said he, and thus he revealed one source of his reverence. "Behold, he cometh," said he, and this exclamation was the result of his reverence. He adored until his faith realized his Lord, and became a second and nobler sight.

I think, too, that his reverence was deepened and his adoration was rendered more fervent by his conviction of the speediness of his Lord's coming. "Behold, he cometh," or is coming: he means to assert that he is even now on his way. As workmen are moved to be more diligent in service when they hear their

master's footfall, so, doubtless, saints are quickened in their devotion when they are conscious that he whom they worship is drawing near. He has gone away to the Father for a while, and so he has left us alone in this world; but he has said, "I will come again and receive you unto myself," and we are confident that he will keep his word. Sweet is the remembrance of that loving promise. That assurance is pouring its savour into John's heart while he is adoring; and it becomes inevitable, as well as most meet and proper, that his doxology should at its close introduce him to the Lord himself, and cause him to cry out, "Behold, he cometh." Having worshipped among the pure in heart, he sees the Lord; having adored the King, he sees him assume the judgment-seat, and appear in the clouds of heaven. When once we enter upon heavenly things we know not how far we can go, nor how high we can climb. John who began with blessing the churches now beholds his Lord.

May the Holy Ghost help us reverently to think of the wondrous coming of our blessed Lord, when he shall appear to the delight of his people and the dismay of the ungodly!

There are three things in the text. They will seem common-places to some of you, and, indeed, they are the common-places of our divine faith, and yet nothing can be of greater importance. The first is, our Lord Jesus comes: "Behold he cometh with clouds." The second is, our Lord Jesus Christ's coming will be seen of all: "Every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him." And, in the third place, this coming will cause great sorrow: "All kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him."

I. May the Holy Spirit help us while, in the first place, we remember that **OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST COMES!**

This announcement is thought worthy of a note of admiration. As the Latins would say, there is an "fee" placed here—"Behold, he cometh." As in the old books the printers put hands

in the margin pointing to special passages, such is this "behold!" It is a *Nota Bene* calling upon us to note well what we are reading. Here is something which we are to hold and behold. We now hear a voice crying, "Come and see!" The Holy Spirit never uses superfluous words, nor redundant notes of exclamation: when he cries, "Behold!" it is because there is reason for deep and lasting attention. Will you turn away when he bids you pause and ponder, linger and look? Oh, you that have been beholding vanity, come and behold the fact that Jesus cometh. You that have been beholding this, and beholding that, and thinking of nothing worthy of your thoughts; forget these passing sights and spectacles, and for once behold a scene which has no parallel. It is not a monarch in her jubilee, but the King of kings in his glory. That same Jesus who went up from Olivet into heaven is coming again to earth in like manner as his disciples saw him go up into heaven. Come and behold this great sight. If ever there was a thing in the world worth looking at, it is this. Behold and see if there was ever glory like unto his glory! Harken to the midnight cry, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh!" It has practically to do with you. "Go ye forth to meet him." This voice is to you, O sons of men. Do not carelessly turn aside; for the Lord God himself demands your attention: he commands you to "Behold!" Will you be blind when God bids you behold? Will you shut your eyes when your Saviour cries, "Behold"? When the finger of inspiration points the way, will not your eye follow where it directs you? "Behold, he cometh." O my hearers, look hither, I beseech you.

If we read the words of our text carefully, this "Behold" shows us first, that this coming is to be vividly realized. I think I see John. He is in the spirit; but on a sudden he seems startled into a keener and more solemn attention. His mind is more awake than usual, though he was ever a man of bright eyes that saw afar. We always liken him to the eagle for the height of his

flight and the keenness of his vision; yet on a sudden, even he seems startled with a more astounding vision. He cries out, "Behold! Behold!" He has caught sight of his Lord. He says not, "He will come by-and-by," but, "I can see him; he is now coming." He has evidently realized the second advent. He has so conceived of the second coming of the Lord that it has become a matter of fact to him; a matter to be spoken of, and even to be written down. "Behold, he cometh!" Have you and I ever realized the coming of Christ so fully as this? Perhaps we believe that he will come. I should hope that we all do that. If we believe that the Lord Jesus has come the first time, we believe also that he will come the second time; but are these equally assured truths to us? Peradventure we have vividly realized the first appearing: from Bethlehem to Golgotha, and from Calvary to Olivet we have traced the Lord, understanding that blessed cry, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" Yes, the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. But have we with equal firmness grasped the thought that he comes again without a sin-offering unto salvation? Do we now say to each other, as we meet in happy fellowship, "Yes, our Lord cometh"? It should be to us not only a prophecy assuredly believed among us, but a scene pictured in our souls, and anticipated in our hearts. My imagination has often set forth that dread scene: but better still, my faith has realized it. I have heard the chariot-wheels of the Lord's approach, and I have endeavoured to set my house in order for his reception. I have felt the shadow of that great cloud which shall attend him, damping the ardour of my worldliness. I hear even now in spirit the sound of the last trumpet, whose tremendous blast startles my soul to serious action, and puts force into my life. Would God that I lived more completely under the influence of that august event!

Brothers and sisters, to this realization I invite you. I wish that we could go together in this, until as we went out of the house we said to one another, "Behold, he cometh!" One said to his fellow, after the Lord had risen, "The Lord has risen indeed." I want you tonight to feel just as certain that the Lord is coming indeed, and I would have you say as much to one another. We are sure that he will come, and that he is on the way; but the benefit of a more vivid realization would be incalculable.

This coming is to be zealously proclaimed, for John does not merely calmly say, "He cometh," but he vigorously cries, "Behold, he cometh." Just as the herald of a king prefaces his message by a trumpet blast that calls attention, so John cries, "Behold!" As the old town-crier was wont to say, "O yes! O yes! O yes!" or to use some other striking formula by which he called upon men to note his announcement, so John stands in the midst of us, and cries, "Behold, he cometh!" He calls attention by that emphatic word "Behold!" It is no ordinary message that he brings, and he would not have us treat his word as a common-place saying. He throws his heart into the announcement. He proclaims it loudly, he proclaims it solemnly, and he proclaims it with authority: "Behold, he cometh." Brethren, no truth ought to be more frequently proclaimed, next to the first coming of the Lord, than his second coming; and you cannot thoroughly set forth all the ends and bearings of the first advent if you forget the second. At the Lord's Supper, there is no discerning the Lord's body unless you discern his first coming; but there is no drinking into his cup to its fulness, unless you hear him say, "Until I come." You must look forward, as well as backward. So must it be with all our ministries; they must look to him on the cross and on the throne. We must vividly realize that he, who has once come, is coming yet again, or else our testimony will be marred, and

one-sided. We shall make lame work of preaching and teaching if we leave out either advent.

And next, it is to be unquestionably asserted. "Behold, he cometh." It is not, "Perhaps he will come"; nor, "Peradventure he may yet appear." "Behold, he cometh" should be dogmatically asserted as an absolute certainty, which has been realized by the heart of the man who proclaims it. "Behold, he cometh." All the prophets say that he will come. From Enoch down to the last that spoke by inspiration, they declare, "The Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints." You shall not find one who has spoken by the authority of God, who does not, either directly or by implication, assert the coming of the Son of man, when the multitudes born of woman shall be summoned to his bar, to receive the recompense of their deeds. All the promises are travailing with this prognostication, "Behold, he cometh." We have his own word for it, and this makes assurance doubly sure. He has told us that he will come again. He often assured his disciples that if he went away from them, he would come again to them; and he left us the Lord's Supper as a parting token to be observed until he comes. As often as we break bread we are reminded of the fact that, though it is a most blessed ordinance, yet it is a temporary one, and will cease to be celebrated when our absent Lord is once again present with us.

What, dear brethren, is there to hinder Christ from coming? When I have studied and thought over this word, "Behold, he cometh," yes, I have said to myself, indeed he does; who shall hold him back? His heart is with his church on earth. In the place where he fought the battle he desires to celebrate the victory. His delights are with the sons of men. All his saints are waiting for the day of his appearing, and he is waiting also. The very earth in her sorrow and her groaning travaileth for his coming, which is to be her redemption. The creation is made subject to vanity for a little while; but when the Lord shall

come again, the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. We might question whether he would come a second time if he had not already come the first time; but if he came to Bethlehem, be assured that his feet shall yet stand upon Olivet. If he came to die, doubt not that he will come to reign. If he came to be despised and rejected of men, why should we doubt that he will come to be admired in all them that believe? His sure coming is to be unquestionably asserted.

Dear friends, this fact that he will come again, is to be taught as demanding our immediate interest. "Behold, he cometh with clouds." Behold, look at it; meditate on it. It is worth thinking of. It concerns yourself. Study it again and again. "He cometh." He will so soon be here that it is put in the present tense: "He cometh." That shaking of the earth; that blotting out of sun and moon; that fleeing of heaven and earth before his face— all these are so nearly here that John describes them as accomplished. "Behold, he cometh."

There is this sense lying in the background— that he is already on the way. All that he is doing in providence and grace is a preparation for his coming. All the events of human history, all the great decisions of his august majesty whereby he ruleth all things— all these are tending towards the day of his appearing. Do not think that he delays his coming, and then upon a sudden he will rush hither in hot haste. He has arranged for it to take place as soon as wisdom allows. We know not what may make the present delay imperative; but the Lord knows, and that suffices. You grow uneasy because near two thousand years have passed since his ascension, and Jesus has not yet come; but you do not know what had to be arranged for, and how far the lapse of time was absolutely necessary for the Lord's designs. Those are no little matters which have filled up the great pause: the intervening centuries have teemed with wonders. A thou-

sand things may have been necessary in heaven itself ere the consummation of all things could be arrived at. When our Lord comes it shall be seen that he came as quickly as he could, speaking after the manner of his infinite wisdom; for he cannot behave himself otherwise than wisely, perfectly, divinely. He cannot be moved by fear or passion so as to act hastily as you and I too often do. He dwells in the leisure of eternity, and in the serenity of omnipotence. He has not to measure out days, and months, and years, and to accomplish so much in such a space or else leave his life-work undone; but according to the power of an endless life he proceeds steadily on, and to him a thousand years are but as one day. Therefore be assured that the Lord is even now coming. He is making everything tend that way. All things are working towards that grand climax. At this moment, and every moment since he went away, the Lord Jesus has been coming back again. "Behold, he cometh!" He is on the way! He is nearer every hour!

And we are told that his coming will be attended by a peculiar sign. "Behold, he cometh with clouds." We shall have no need to question whether it is the Son of man who has come, or whether he is indeed come. This is to be no secret matter: his coming will be as manifest as yonder clouds. In the wilderness the presence of Jehovah was known by a visible pillar of cloud by day, and an equally visible pillar of fire by night. That pillar of cloud was the sure token that the Lord was in his holy place, dwelling between the cherubim. Such is the token of the coming of the Lord Christ.

*"Every eye the cloud shall scan,
Ensign of the Son of man."*

So it is written, "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth

mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." I cannot quote at this time all those many passages of Scripture in which it is indicated that our Lord will come either sitting upon a cloud, or "with the clouds," or "with the clouds of heaven but such expressions are abundant. Is it not to show that his coming will be majestic? He maketh the clouds his chariots. He cometh with hosts of attendants, and these of a nobler sort than earthly monarchs can summon to do them homage. With clouds of angels, cherubim and seraphim, and all the armies of heaven he comes. With all the forces of nature, thundercloud and blackness of tempest, the Lord of all makes his triumphant entrance to judge the world. The clouds are the dust of his feet in that dread day of battle when he shall ease him of his adversaries, shaking them out of the earth with his thunder, and consuming them with the devouring flame of his lightning. All heaven shall gather with its utmost pomp to the great appearing of the Lord, and all the terrible grandeur of nature shall then be seen at its full. Not as the Man of sorrows, despised and rejected of men, shall Jesus come; but as Jehovah came upon Sinai in the midst of thick clouds and a terrible darkness, so shall he come, whose coming shall be the final judgment.

The clouds are meant to set forth the mighty as well as the majesty, of his coming. "Ascribe ye strength unto God: his excellency is over Israel, and his strength is in the clouds." This was the royal token given by Daniel the prophet in his seventh chapter, at the thirteenth verse, "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven." Not less than divine is the glory of the Son of God, who once had not where to lay his head. The sublimest objects in nature shall most fitly minister to the manifest glory of the returning King of men. "Behold, he cometh;" not with the swaddling-bands of his infancy, the weariness of his manhood,

the shame of his death, but with all the glorious tapestry of heaven's high chambers. The hanging of the divine throne-room shall aid his state.

The clouds, also, denote the terror of his coming to the ungodly. His saints shall be caught up together with him in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; but to those that shall remain on earth the clouds shall turn their blackness and horror of darkness. Then shall the impenitent behold this dread vision — the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven. The clouds shall fill them with dread, and the dread shall be abundantly justified, for those clouds are big with vengeance, and shall burst in judgment on their heads. His great white throne, though it be bright and lustrous with hope to his people, will with its very brightness and whiteness of immaculate justice strike dead the hopes of all those who trusted that they might live in sin and yet go unpunished. "Behold, he cometh. He cometh with clouds."

I am in happy circumstances to-night, because my subject requires no effort of imagination from me. To indulge fancy on such a theme would be a wretched profanation of so sublime a subject, which in its own simplicity should come home to all hearts. Think clearly for a moment, till the meaning becomes real to you. Jesus Christ is coming, coming in unwonted splendour. When he comes he will be enthroned far above the attacks of his enemies, the persecutions of the godless, and the sneers of sceptics. He is coming in the clouds of heaven, and we shall be among the witnesses of his appearing. Let us dwell upon this truth.

II. Our second observation is this: OUR LORD'S COMING WILL BE SEEN OF ALL. "Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him."

I gather from this expression, first, that it will be a literal

appearing, and an actual sight. If the second advent was to be a spiritual manifestation, to be perceived by the minds of men, the phraseology would be, "Every mind shall perceive him." But it is not so: we read, "Every eye shall see him." Now, the mind can behold the spiritual, but the eye can only see that which is distinctly material and visible. The Lord Jesus Christ will not come spiritually, for in that sense he is always here; but he will come really and substantially, for every eye shall see him, even those unspiritual eyes which gazed on him with hate, and pierced him. Go not away and dream, and say to yourself, "Oh, there is some spiritual meaning about all this." Do not destroy the teaching of the Holy Ghost by the idea that there will be a spiritual manifestation of the Christ of God, but that a literal appearing is out of the question. That would be altering the record. The Lord Jesus shall come to earth a second time as literally as he has come a first time. The same Christ who ate a piece of a broiled fish and of a honeycomb after he had risen from the dead; the same who said, "Handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have"—this same Jesus, with a material body, is to come in the clouds of heaven. In the same manner as he went up he shall come down. He shall be literally seen. The words cannot be honestly read in any other way.

"Every eye shall see him." Yes, I do literally expect to see ray Lord Jesus with these eyes of mine, even as that saint expected who long ago fell asleep, believing that though the worms devoured his body, yet in his flesh he should see God, whom his eyes should see for himself, and not another. There will be a real resurrection of the body, though the moderns doubt it: such a resurrection that we shall see Jesus with our own eyes. We shall not find ourselves in a shadowy, dreamy land of floating fictions, where we may perceive, but cannot see. We shall not be airy nothings, mysterious, vague, impalpable;

but we shall literally see our glorious Lord, whose appearing will be no phantom show, or shadow dance. Never day more real than the day of judgment; never sight more true than the Son of man upon the throne of his glory. Will you take this statement home, that you may feel the force of it? We are getting too far away from facts nowadays, and too much into the realm of myths and notions. "Every eye shall see him," in this there shall be no delusion.

Note well that he is to be seen of all kinds of living men: every eye shall see him: the king and the peasant, the most learned and the most ignorant. Those that were blind before shall see when he appears. I remember a man born blind who loved our Lord most intensely, and he was wont to glory in this, that his eyes had been reserved for his Lord. Said he, "The first whom I shall ever see will be the Lord Jesus Christ. The first sight that greets my newly-opened eyes will be the Son of man in his glory." There is great comfort in this to all who are now unable to behold the sun. Since "every eye shall see him," you also shall see the King in his beauty. Small pleasure is this to eyes that are full of filthiness and pride: you care not for this sight, and yet you must see it whether you please or do not please. You have hitherto shut your eyes to good things, but when Jesus comes you must see him. All that dwell upon the face of the earth, if not at the same moment, yet with the same certainty, shall behold the once crucified Lord. They will not be able to hide themselves, nor to hide him from their eyes. They will dread the sight, but it will come upon them, even as the sun shines on the thief who delights in the darkness. They will be obliged to own in dismay that they behold the Son of man: they will be so overwhelmed with the sight that there will be no denying it.

He will be seen of those who have been long since dead. What a sight that will be for Judas, and for Pilate, and for

Caiaphas, and for Herod! What a sight it will be for those who, in their lifetime, said that there was no Saviour, and no need of one; or that Jesus was a mere man, and that his blood was not a propitiation for sin! Those that scoffed and reviled him have long since died, but they shall all rise again, and rise to this heritage among the rest— that they shall see him whom they blasphemed sitting in the clouds of heaven. Prisoners are troubled at the sight of the judge. The trumpet of assize brings no music to the ears of criminals. But thou must hear it, O impenitent sinner! Even in thy grave thou must hear the voice of the Son of God, and live, and come forth from the tomb, to receive the things done in thy body, whether they were good or bad. Death cannot hide thee, nor the vault conceal thee, nor rottenness and corruption deliver thee. Thou art bound to see in thy body the Lord who will judge both thee and thy fellows.

It is mentioned here that he will especially be seen by those that pierced him. In this is included all the company that nailed him to the tree, with those that took the spear and made the gash in his side; indeed, all that had a hand in his cruel crucifixion. It includes all of these, but it comprehends many more besides. “They also who pierced him” are by no means a few. Who have pierced him? Why those that once professed to love him, and have gone back to the world. Those that once ran well, “What did hinder them?” And now they use their tongues to speak against the Christ whom once they professed to love. They also have pierced him whose inconsistent lives have brought dishonour upon the sacred name of Jesus. They also have pierced him, who refused his love, stifled their consciences, and refused his rebukes. Alas, that so many of you should be piercing him now by your base neglect of his salvation! They that went every Sunday to hear of him, and that remained hearers only, destroying their own souls rather than yield to his infinite love: these pierced his tender heart. Dear

hearers, I wish I could plead effectually with you tonight, so that you would not continue any longer among the number of those that pierced him. If you will look at Jesus now, and mourn for your sin, he will put your sin away; and then you will not be ashamed to see him in that day. Even though you did pierce him, you will be able to sing, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." But, remember, if you persevere in piercing him, and fighting against him, you will still have to see him in that day, to your terror and despair. He will be seen by you and by me, however ill we may behave. And what horror will that sight cost us!

I felt unfit to preach to you to-night; but last Lord's-day I said that I would preach to-night if I could possibly manage it. It seemed barely possible, but I could not do less than keep my word; and I also longed to be with you, for your sakes; for peradventure there may not remain many more occasions on which I shall be permitted to preach the gospel among you. I am often ill; who knows how soon I shall come to my end? I would use all that remains to me of physical strength and providential opportunity. We never know how soon we may be cut off, and then we are gone for ever from the opportunity of benefiting our fellow-men. It were a pity to be taken away with one opportunity of doing good unused. So would I earnestly plead with you under the shadow of this great truth: I would urge you to make ready, since we shall both behold the Lord in the day of his appearing. Yes, I shall stand in that great throng. You also will be there. How will you feel? You are not accustomed, perhaps, to attend a place of worship; but you will be there, and the spot will be very solemn to you. You may absent yourself from the assemblies of the saints, but you will not be able to absent yourself from the gathering of that day. You will be there, one in that great multitude; and you will see Jesus the Lord as truly as if you were the only person before him, and he

will look upon you as certainly as if you were the only one that was summoned to his bar.

Will you kindly think of all this as I close this second head? Silently repeat to yourself the words, "Every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him."

III. And now I must close with the third head, which is a painful one, but needs to be enlarged upon: **HIS COMING WILL CAUSE GREAT SORROW.** What does the text say about his coming?

"All kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." "All kindreds of the earth." Then this sorrow will be very general. You thought, perhaps, that when Christ came, he would come to a glad world, welcoming him with song and music. You thought that there might be a few ungodly persons who would be destroyed with the breath of his mouth, but that the bulk of mankind would receive him with delight. See how different—"All kindreds of the earth," that is, all sorts of men that belong to the earth; all earth-born men, men out of all nations and kindreds and tongues shall weep and wail, and gnash their teeth at his coming. O sirs, this is a sad outlook! We have no smooth things to prophesy. What think you of this?

And, next, this sorrow will be very great. They shall "wail." I cannot put into English the full meaning of that most expressive word. Sound it at length, and it conveys its own meaning. It is as when men wring their hands and burst out into a loud cry; or as when eastern women, in their anguish, rend their garments, and lift up their voices with the most mournful notes. All the kindreds of the earth shall wail: wail as a mother laments over her dead child; wail as a man might wail who found himself hopelessly imprisoned and doomed to die. Such will be the hopeless grief of all the kindreds of the earth at the sight of Christ in the clouds: if they remain impenitent, they shall not be able to be silent; they shall not be able to repress or

conceal their anguish, but they shall wail, or openly give vent to their horror. What a sound that will be which will go up before high heaven when Jesus sits upon the cloud, and in the fulness of his power summons them to judgment! Then “they shall wail because of him.”

Will your voice be heard in that wailing? Will your heart be breaking in that general dismay? How will you escape? If you are one of the kindreds of the earth, and remain impenitent, you will wail with the rest of them. Unless you now fly to Christ, and hide yourself in him, and so become one of the kindred of heaven— one of his chosen and blood-washed ones— them from their sins— who shall praise his name for washing— unless you do this, there will be wailing at the judgment-seat of Christ, and you will be in it.

Then it is quite clear that men will not be universally converted when Christ comes; because, if they were so, they would not wail. Then they would lift up the cry, “Welcome, welcome, Son of God!” The coming of Christ would be as the hymn puts it—

*“Hark, those bursts of acclamation!
Hark, those loud triumphant chords!
Jesus takes the highest station.
Oh, what joy the sight affords!”*

These acclamations come from his people. But according to the text the multitude of mankind will weep and wail, and therefore they will not be among his people. Do not, therefore, look for salvation to some coming day, but believe in Jesus now, and find in him your Saviour at once. If you joy in him now, you shall much more rejoice in him in that day; but if you will have cause to wail at his coming, it will be well to wail at once.

Note one more truth. It is quite certain that when Jesus

comes in those latter days men will not be expecting great things of him. You know the talk, they have nowadays about "a larger hope." To-day they deceive the people with the idle dream of repentance and restoration after death, a fiction unsupported by the least tittle of Scripture. If these kindreds of the earth expected that when Christ would come they would all die out and cease to be, they would rejoice that thereby they escaped the wrath of God. Would not each unbeliever say, "It were a consummation devoutly to be wished"? If they thought that at his coming there would be a universal restoration and a general jail delivery of souls long shut up in prison, would they wail? If Jesus could be supposed to come to proclaim a general restoration they would not wail, but shout for joy. Ah, no! It is because his coming to the impenitent is black with blank despair that they will wail because of him. If his first coming does not give you eternal life, his second coming will not. If you do not hide in his wounds when he comes as your Saviour, there will lie no hiding place for you when he comes as your Judge. They will weep and wail because, having rejected the Lord Jesus, they have turned their backs on the last possibility of hope.

Why do they wail because of him? Will it not be because they will see him in his glory, and they will recollect that they slighted and despised him? They will see him come to judge them, and they will remember that once he stood at their door with mercy in his hands and said, "Open to me," but they would not admit him. They refused his blood: they refused his righteousness: they trifled with his sacred name; and now they must give an account for this wickedness. They put him away in scorn, and now, when he comes, they find that they can trifle with him no longer. The days of child's-play and of foolish delay are over; and now they have solemnly to give in their life's account. See, the books are opened! They are covered with

dismay as they remember their sins, and know that they are written down by a faithful pen. They must give an account; and unwashed and unforgiven they cannot render that account without knowing that the sentence will be, "Depart, ye cursed." This is why they weep and wail because of him.

O souls, my natural love of ease makes me wish that I could preach pleasant things to you; but they are not in my commission. I need scarce wish, however, to preach a soft gospel, for so many are already doing it to your cost. As I love your immortal souls, I dare not flatter you. As I shall have to answer for it in the last great day, I must tell you the truth.

*"Ye sinners seek his face
Whose wrath ye cannot bear."*

Seek the mercy of God to-night. I have come here in pain to implore you to be reconciled to God. "Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

But if you will not have my Lord Jesus, he comes all the same for that. He is on the road now, and when he comes you will wail because of him. Oh that you would make him your friend, and then meet him with joy! Why will ye die? He gives life to all those who trust him. Believe, and live.

God save your souls to-night, and he shall have the glory.
Amen.

FOUR
THE CHRIST OF PATMOS

SERMON GIVEN ON JANUARY 27, 1861

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 1:12-17

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT
VOLUME 7

“And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his

strength. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead."

REVELATION 1:12-17

The Lord Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Having neither beginning of days, nor end of years, he is a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. But the views which his people have of him are extremely varied. According to our progress in grace, will be the stand-point from which we view the Saviour; and according to the position from which we look at him, will be what we see of him. Christ is the same, but believers do not all see him in the same clear light, nor do they all approach to the same nearness of fellowship. Some only know his offices; others only admire his character; far fewer commune with his person; but there be some who have advanced still further, who have come to feel the unity of all the Church with the person of Christ Jesus their Lord. Under the Old Testament, the lesson to be taught was the same, but the capacity of the learners differed, and hence the mode of teaching the lesson differed also. A poor man, under the Jewish dispensation, was the type of an uninstructed Christian; the rich man was the picture of the well-taught believer. Now, the poor Jew brought a turtle dove or two young pigeons. (Leviticus i. 14-17.) The necks of these were wrung and they were offered. The poor man in that was only taught this lesson, that it was only by death and blood that his sin could be put away. The richer Israelite who had it within his power brought a bullock. (Leviticus i. 3-9.) This bullock was not only slain but it had to be cut in pieces; the legs, the fat, the inwards, were washed in water, and all these were laid in special order upon the altar, to teach him even as Christ now teacheth the intelligent and instructed believer that there is within the mere act of

bloodshedding an order and fulness of wisdom which only advanced believers can perceive. The scape-goat taught one truth, the paschal lamb another; the show-bread set forth one lesson, the lighting of the lamps another. All the types were intended to teach the one great mystery of Christ manifest in the flesh and seen of angels; but they taught it in different ways, because men in those times, as now, had different capacities, and could only learn by little at a time. As it was under the Old Testament, it is under the New. All Christians know Christ, but they do not all know him to the same degree and in the same way. He took him up in his arms, and was so overjoyed, that he said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word." You know how, in the Church of England, that Song of Simeon is chanted every Sabbath-day, as if it were true that many of the worshippers had never gotten further than that, to know Christ as a babe, a Saviour whom they could take up in their arms, whom they could apprehend by faith and call their own. There is an advance, however, upon that experience when not only can we take Christ up, but we can see Christ taking us up; when we can see not only how we are apprehend him by faith, but how he apprehended us of old in the eternal covenant, and took up the seed of Abraham, and was made in their likeness that he might redeem their souls. It is a great joy to know Christ, though it be but only as the infant consolation of Israel. It is a happy privilege to be permitted with the Easterns to bring our gold, frankincense, and myrrh, and worship Christ, the new-born King. This, however, is but a lesson for beginners; it is one of the first syllables of the school-book of grace. To take Christ up in our arms is the sure pledge of salvation, at the same time it is but the dawn of heavenly light in experience.

But, my dear brethren, the disciples of Jesus knew Christ in a higher degree than Simeon, for they regarded him not simply

as the Incarnate One, but as their Prophet and Teacher. They sat at his feet; they heard his words; they knew that never man spake like that man. Under his teaching they were led on to high degrees of knowledge. He gave to them the divine texts, from which, when the Spirit had descended, they drew sacred lessons which they taught to the multitude. They knew more, I say, of Christ than Simeon – Simeon knew him as one whom he could take hold of by faith, and who would make glad his eyes, but the disciples knew him as one who taught them; not merely saved them, but instructed them. There are hundreds of believers who have got as far as this. Christ is to them the great teacher of doctrine, he is the great expositor of God's will and law, and they look up to him with reverence as the Rabbi of their faith. Ay! But there was one of the disciples at least who knew Jesus Christ even better than this. There was one chosen out of the twelve, as the twelve had been chosen out of the rest, who knew Christ as a dear companion, and as a sweet friend. There was one who knew his bosom as affording a pillow for his weary head, one who had felt his heart beat close to his cheek, one who had been with him and the mountain of Transfiguration, and had enjoyed the fellowship with the Father, through his Son Jesus Christ. Now I fear that those who advance as far as John did are not very many. They are doctrinal Christians, and thus they have made an advance upon those who are only trusting Christians and not more. But John had taken a wonderful stride before his fellow men, when he could claim Christ as being dear to him, the companion of his life, the friend of his days. May the Lord teach each of us more and more how to walk with Jesus and to know his love!

But, brethren, there was one who comprehended Christ Jesus fully as well as the beloved disciple. 'Twas Mary. She knew him as one that had been born of her. Blessed is that Christian who can say that Christ is formed in him the hope of

glory, and who has come to look not at Christ as only on the cross, but as Christ in his own soul, who knows that he himself as truly bears the Saviour within him as ever did his Virgin Mother, – who feels that in him, too, by the Holy Ghost, Christ is conceived, – that in him the nature of Christ, that holy thing which is born of the Holy Spirit, is ripening and maturing till it shall destroy the old man, and in perfect manhood shall be born into eternal life. This, I say, even eclipses John’s knowledge, but it is not perhaps the highest of all. Further than this we will not venture this morning, but as some other time, when our eyes are more enlightened, we may take a glimpse of yet more excellent glory.

Dear friends, you who love the Saviour, wish for nothing so much as to see more and more of him. Your desire is that you may see him as he is, yet I can well conceive, if you might indulge your wishes, you would wish that you had seen him as he was transfigured. Do you not look back almost with envy upon those three favoured ones who went up to the top of Tabor, and were there o’ershadowed when his garment became whiter than any fuller could make it, and there appeared unto him Moses and Elias talking with him? Ye need not envy, for you know how they were overpowered with the sight, and were “heavy with sleep.” You, too, would sleep if you had but the same strength as they, and had to gaze upon the same surpassing glory. I know, too, you have wished that you could have seen him in the garden of Gethsemane. Oh! To have seen that agony; to have heard those groans; to have marked that bloody sweat as it fell in clots to the frozen ground! Well might ye envy those who were chosen to keep the sacred vigil, and to have watched with him one hour. But you will remember that they slept. “He found them sleeping for sorrow.” With your powers of endurance, if you had no more than they, you, too, would sleep, for as in the transfiguration, so in that agony and

bloody sweat, there was a sight which eye can never see, because there was a glory and a shame which man can never comprehend.

But peradventure some of you have longed and wished that you had seen him on the cross. Oh! To have beheld him there, to have beheld him there, to have seen those hands nailed “to fix the world’s salvation fast,” and those feet fast to the wood as though he tarried to be gracious, though the world waited long in coming. Oh! To have seen that mangled naked body and that pierced side! John, thou who didst see and bear witness, we might envy thee! But, oh! My brethren, why should we? Why should we? For have we not seen by faith all the sufferings of Christ, without that horror which must have passed over the beholders, and which did pass over his mother when a sword pierced through her own heart also, because she saw her son bleeding on the tree. Oh! How delightful it must have been to have beheld the Saviour on the morning of the resurrection! – to have seen him as he rose with new life from the chambers of the dead, to have beheld him when he stood in the midst of the disciples, the doors being shut, and said, “Peace be unto you!” How pleasant to have gone to the top of the mountain with him, and to have seen him as he ascended, blessing his disciples, a cloud receiving him out of their sight! Surely, we might well desire to spend an eternity in visions like these. But permit me to say that I think the picture of our text is preferable to any, and if you have desires after those I have already mentioned, you ought to have far more intense longings to see Christ as John did in this vision, for this is, perhaps, the most complete, the most wonderful, and at the same time, most important manifestation of Christ, that was ever seen by human eye.

There will be two things which will take our attention this morning. The first briefly, namely, the importance of this vision to us; and then, secondly, the meaning of the vision.

I. The value of this vision to us.

Some may be inclined to say, "The preacher has selected a very curious passage of Scripture; one that may tickle our fancy, but that can be of no spiritual benefit to us." My friends, you labour under a very great mistake, and I trust I may convince you of that in a minute or two. Remember that this representation, this symbolical picture of Christ, is a representation of the same Christ who suffered for our sins. Strangely diverse as it may seem to be, yet here we have the very same Christ. John calls him the Son of man, that sweet and humble name by which Jesus was so wont to describe himself. That he was the same identical person is very clear, because John speaks of him at once as being like unto the Son of man, and I think he means that he perceived in his majesty a likeness to him whom he had known in his shame. There was not the thorn-crown; but he knew the brow. There was not the mark of the wounds; perhaps the seven stars had taken the position of the prints of the nails; but he knew the hand for all that. As in our new bodies, when we rise from the tomb, we shall no doubt know each other, though the body which shall rise will have but faint resemblance to that which is sown in the tomb, for it will be a miraculous and marvelous development in flower of the poor withered thing that is but the buried seed; as I doubt not I shall be able to recognise your visage in heaven, because I knew your countenance on earth; so did John discover, despite the glories of Christ, the identical person whom he had seen in abasement and woe. Christian, look with reverence there. There is your Lord, the Christ of the manager, the Christ of the wilderness, the Christ of Capernaum and Bethsaida, the Christ of Gethsemane, the Christ of Golgatha is there, and it cannot be unimportant for you to turn aside to see this great sight.

Further, this picture represents to us what Christ is now, and hence its extreme value. What he was when he was here

on earth is all-important to me, but what he is now is quite as much a matter of vital consequence. Some set exceeding great store by what he shall be when he comes to judge the earth in righteousness, and so do we. But we really think that Christ in the future is not to be preferred to a knowledge of Christ in the present; for we want to know to-day, in the midst of present strife, and present pain, and present conflict, what Jesus Christ is now. And this becomes all the more cheering, because we know that what he is now we shall be, for we shall be like him when we shall see him as he is.

And yet a third consideration lends importance to the topic of our text, namely, that Christ in the text is represented as what he is to the churches. You will perceive he is portrayed as standing in the midst of the golden candlesticks, by which we understand the churches. We love to know what he is to the nations; what he is to his peculiar people, the Jews; what he will be to his enemies; but it is best for us, as members of Christian churches, to know what he is in the churches, so that every deacon, elder, and church-member here should give earnest heed to this passage, for he has here pictures to him that Christ to whom the Church looks up as her great Lord and hope; that Messiah whom every day she serves and adores.

And I might add yet once more, I think the subject of our text is valuable when we consider what an effect it would have upon us if we really felt and understood it; we should fall at his feet as dead. Blessed position! Does the death alarm you? We are never so much alive as when we are dead at his feet. We are never so truly living as when the creature dies away in the presence of the all-glorious reigning King. I know this, that the death of all that is sinful in me is my soul's highest ambition, ay, and the death of all that is carnal, and all that savours of the old Adam. Would that it would die. And where can it die but at the feet of him who hath the new life, and who by manifesting

himself in all his glory is to purge away our dross and tin? I only would that this morning I had enough of the Spirit's might so to set forth my Master that I might contribute even in a humble measure to make you fall at his feet as dead, that he might be in us our All in All.

II. What is the meaning of this vision?

"Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." If God manifest in a bush commands solemnity, what shall we say of God manifest in Christ, and manifest too, after the most marvelous manner? The words of our text are symbols; they are not to be understood literally. Of course, Christ does not appear in heaven under this literal form; but this is the appearance under which he was set forth to the intellect of John. John was not so benighted as to understand any of this literally. He knew that the candlesticks were not meant for candlesticks, but for the seven light-giving Churches; that the stars were not stars, but ministers; and he understood right well, that all the whole description through, it was the symbol, and the spirit of the vision he was to look to, and not to the literal words.

But, to begin: — "And in the midst of the seven candlesticks, one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle." We have here, then, first, in Christ as he is to-day, a picture of his official dignity, and of his royal honours. Clothed with a garment down to the feet. This was the robe constantly worn by kings, the garment which descended, and left only the feet apparent. This was also the peculiar dress of the priest. A priest of the Jewish dispensation, had the long flowing white robe which reached down to the ground, and covered him entirely. Christ, then, in being thus clothed, asserts his kingship and his eternal priesthood. It may indicate the fact, too, that he hath clothed himself with righteousness. Though he was once naked, when he was

the substitute for naked sinners who had cast away the robe of their righteousness, he is naked now no more; he wears that garment dipped in his own blood, woven from the top throughout, by his own hands, – he wears himself that garment which he casts over the whole Church, which is his body. However, the main idea here is that of official dignity and position; and when you read of the golden girdle which was about the paps, it is a representation of how the high priest was girt. He was girt with a girdle that had gold in it. The girdles of the other priests were not of gold, but that of the high priest's was mainly made of that precious metal; and it was girt about the paps; not at the waist, but across the breast, as if to show that the love of Christ, or the place where his loving heart beat most, was just the spot where he bound firmly about himself the garments of his official dignity; as if his love was the faithful girdle of his loins, as if the affection of his heart ever kept him fast and firm to the carrying out of all the offices which he had undertaken for us. The picture is not difficult to imagine before your eyes; I only want the Christian mind to stop a minute and consider it. Come, believer, thou hast a Lord to worship who is clothed to-day with office. Come before him, he can govern for thee, he is King; he can plead for thee, he is Priest. Come, worship Him, He is adored in heaven; come, trust him; lo, at that golden girdle hang the keys of heaven, and death, and hell. No more despised and rejected of men, no more naked to his shame, no more houseless, homeless, friendless. His royal dignity ensures the obedience of angels, and his priestly merit wins the acceptance of his Father.

*“Give him, my soul, thy cause to plead,
Nor doubt the Father's grace.”*

Let his garment and his robe compel thy faith to trust thy

soul, ay, and thy temporal affairs too, wholly and entirely in his prevailing hands.

You will perceive that there is no crown upon the head as yet, that crown is reserved for his advent. He comes soon to reign, even now he is King; but he is a king rather with the girdle about his loins than with the crown upon his head. Soon he shall come in the clouds of heaven, and his people shall go forth to meet him, and then shall we see him "with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart." Our soul longeth and watcheth for the day when the many crowns shall be upon his head; yet, even now, is he King of kings and Lord of lords; even now is he the High Priest of our profession, and as such we adore and trust him.

"His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow," When the Church described him in the Canticles, she said "His locks are bushy and black as a raven's." How understood we this apparent discrepancy? My brethren, the Church in the Canticles looked forward, she looked forward to days and ages that were to come, and she perceived his perpetual youth; she pictured him as one who would never grow old, whose hair would ever have the blackness of youth. And do we not bless God that her view of him was true? We can say of Jesus, "Thou hast the dew of thy youth;" but the Church of to-day looks backward to his work as complete; we see him now as the Ancient of eternal days. We believe that he is not the Christ of 1800 years ago merely, but, before the day-star knew its place, he was one with the Eternal Father. When we see in the picture his head and his hair white as snow, we understand the antiquity of his reign. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." When all these things were not, when the old mountains had not lifted their hoary heads into the clouds, when the yet more hoary sea had

never roared in tempest; ere the lamps of heaven had been lit, when God dwelt alone in his immensity, and the unnavigated waves of ether, if there were such, had never been fanned by wing of seraph, and the solemnity of silence had never been startled by the song of cherubim, Jesus was of old in eternity with God. We know how he was despised and rejected of men, but we understand, too, what he meant when he said, "Before Abraham was, I am." We know how he who died, when but a little more than thirty years of age, was verily the Father of the everlasting ages, having neither beginning of days nor end of years.

No doubt there is here coupled with the idea of antiquity, that of reverence. Men rise up before the hoary head and pay it homage; and do not angels, principalities, and power bow before him? Though he was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, yet is he not crowned with glory and honour? Do they not all delight to obey his behests, and lay their borrowed dignities at his feet? O Christian! Rejoice that thou servest one so venerable, so worthy to be praised; let thy soul join now in the song which rolls upward to his throne, "Unto him that is, and that was, and that is to come, the Alpha and the Omega, unto him be glory, and honour, and dominion, and power, for ever and ever. Amen."

"His eyes were as a flame of fire." This represents Christ's oversight of his Church, as he is in the Church the Ancient of Eternal Days, her Everlasting Father, and her head to be revered, so is he in the Church, the Universal Overseer, the great Bishop and Shepherd of souls. And what eyes he has! How penetrating! "Like flames of fire." How discriminating! "Like flames of fire," which melt the dross and only leave the real metal. "Like flames of fire," he sees, not by light without, but his own eyes supply the light with which he sees. His knowledge of the Church is not derived from the Church's prayers, nor from

her experience of her wants, nor from her verbal statements; he sees by no borrowed light of the sun, or of the moon, his eyes are lamps unto themselves. In the Church's thick darkness, when she is trampled down, when no light shines upon her, he sees her, for his eyes are "like flames of fire." Oh! What sweet consolation this must be to a child of God. If you cannot tell your Lord where you are, he can see you, and though you cannot tell what you really want, or how to pray, yet he can not only see, but he can see with such discrimination that he can tell precisely what your true wants are, and what are only fancies of an unsanctified desire. "His eyes were as a flame of fire." Why, you are in darkness, and you see no light, but he is the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world, and he sees by the light of his own person all that goes on in you. I love that doctrine of Christ's universal oversight of all his Church. You know there is an idea sometimes held out that the Church ought to have a visible head, that so all matters may come by degrees through hierarchy to some one man, that so one man knowing all things, may be able to guide the Church aright. An absurd, because impossible idea. What man could possibly say, "I keep the Church. I water it, I watch it every moment." No, no, it must be this, "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." There is ne'er a trial to the Church, there is ne'er a pang she feels, but those eyes of fire discern. Oh! Think not you would rather view the eyes that once were fountains of tears; they wept for your sins, those sins are put away, it is better for you now that to burn them up, not merely to see your wants, but for ever to fulfil your desires. Bow before him, lay bare your heart, hope not to conceal anything. Think it not needful that you should explain aught, he seeth and he knoweth, for his eyes are like a flame of fire.

"And his feet unto fine brass, as if they burned in a

furnace.” The head, you see, is reverent; the feet are blazing; the countenance is like the sun for glory; the feet like burning brass for trial. I think we may understand by this the Church of God on earth – those saints united to Christ who are the last of the body; the lower part who are in these times still treading the earth. Christ is in heaven; his head is like “the sun that shineth in his strength.” Christ is on earth in the midst of his Church, and where his feet walk among the golden candlesticks, they walk in fire, they are like brass that burns in a furnace. Now, we think that wherever Christ is, there will be the fire of trial to his Church. I would never believe that we were on the Lord’s side if all men were on our side. If the words we speak were not constantly misrepresented, we could imagine we spoke the words of God. If we were always understood, we should think that we spoke not those things which the carnal mind cannot receive. Nay, brethren, nay, expect not ease! Expect not that you shall attain to the crown without suffering. The feet of Christ burn in the furnace, and you belong to his body – you do not belong to his head, for you are not in heaven; you do not belong to his loins, for you wear not the golden girdle – but you belong to his feet and you must burn in the furnace. What a wondrous picture is this of Christ! Can you conceive it? You know that the robe came down even to the feet; perhaps it covered them, but yet the glowing heat was such that through the robe might be seen the burning of the feet of brass. They were fine brass too; they were metal that could not be consumed, a metal that would not yield to the heat. And so is Christ’s Church. The old motto of the early Protestants was an anvil, because “the Church” said they, “is an anvil that has broken many hammers.” The Evil One smites her, she does not reply, except by bearing, and in that enduring with patience is her kingdom; in that suffering is her victory; in the patient possessing of her soul, in her glowing; in that suffering is her

victory; in the patient possessing of her soul, in her glowing in the furnace and not yielding to the fire, in her shining and being purified by its heat and not giving way and being molten by its fury, in that is as greatly the triumph of Christ, as in that bright countenance which is as “the sun shining in his strength.” I rejoice in this part of my text; it comforts one’s soul when cast down and deeply tried. “His feet were like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace.” Let us say to our souls –

*“Must I be carried to the skies
On flowery beds of ease;
While others fought to win the prize,
And sail’d through bloody seas?
No, I must fight if I would reign;
Increase my courage, Lord!
I’ll bear the toil, endure the pain,
Supported by thy word.”*

But I must pass on, having no time this morning to dwell long on any one of these points. “His voice as the sounds of many waters.” And what is the voice of Christ? It is a voice which is heard in heaven. Ye angels, bow before him! They hear the command – “And at the name of Jesus every knee doth bow of things in heaven.” It is a voice that is heard in hell. Ye fiends, be still! “Vex not mine anointed: do my prophets no harm.” And there those hell-hounds champ their chains, longing to escape from their imprisonment. It is a voice that is heard on earth too. Wherever Christ is preached, wherever his cross is lifted up, there is there a voice that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel. Sometimes we are apt to think that Christ’s voice is not heard. We his ministers are such feeble creatures. If we have some few thousand to listen to our voice, yet how many forget! Amidst the storm of the battle cry,

amidst political clamours, who can hope that the still small voice of the ministry should be heard? But it is heard. Across the Alleghanies the voice of God's minister echoes. No evil thing shall in the end stand against the protests of God's servants. That which has made slavery tremble to its very soul, has been the constant protest of Christian ministers in England; and though the lying prophets of the Southern States have sought to undo the good, yet must they fall before the force of truth. There is not a humble village pastor, standing in his pulpit to edify his feeble flock, who is not thereby exerting an influence on all generations yet to come. The minister of Christ stands in the midst of the telegraphic system of the universe, and works it according to Jehovah's will. All society is but a tremulous mass of jelly yielding to the influence of Christ's gospel. I say not, sirs, that there is any power in us; but there is power in Christ's word when it peals through us in trumpet tones. There is power in Christ's word to waken the dry bones that lie in full many a valley China shall hear; Hindostan must listen; the gods of the heathen, though they hear not, yet tremble; and feeble though we be in ourselves, yet doth God make us mighty to the pulling down of strongholds, and he shall make us conquerors through his grace. If you could stand upon some exceeding high mountain, and could be gifted with enlarged powers of vision, it would be a wonderful thing to be able to see the Atlantic and Pacific, the Indian ocean, and all the seas of the world at once. The supposition of course could never be carried out, but if we could imagine a wide extended plain, suppose we are standing on the loftiest summit while a tremendous storm sweeps o'er the whole, the sea roars and the fulness thereof – yea, all the seas roar at once – the Atlantic echoes to the Pacific; the Pacific passes on the strain to the great Indian ocean; the Mediterranean cries to the Red Sea; the Red Sea shouts aloud to the Arctic, and the Arctic to the

Antarctic. They clap their hands, and all at once there is a voice of many waters. Such is the voice of Christ's ministry on earth. It may seem to be feeble, but it never is. There may be but a handful of men: they may be in the glens of Piedmont; they may be found upon the hills Switzerland, and they may be dying for Christ; but their tramp is the tramp of heroes; their voice shakes the ages, and eternity itself trembles before it. Oh! How consolatory to the heir of heaven and to the minister of Christ is the fact, that his voice is as "the sound of many waters."

"And he had in his right hand seven stars." The Church should always see Christ as holding up her ministers. Ministers are very much in danger. Stars, or those things that seem to be stars, may be but shooting stars; they may be but meteors and flash awhile right soon to melt away; but the ministers of Christ, though they be in danger, yet, if they be Christ's ministers, are perfectly safe. He keeps the seven stars. The celestial Pleiades of the gospel are always in Christ's hand; and who can pluck them thence? Church of God! Be it ever your prayer that Christ would keep his ministers wherever they are: commend them to him; and remember you have this as a king of promise on which to ground your prayer. Brethren, pray for us! We are a kind of promise on which to ground your prayer. Brethren, pray for us! We are but like twinkling stars at least, and he is as the sun that shineth in his strength. Ask him to give us light; ask him to keep us ever burning; ask him that we may be as the pole-star guiding the slave to liberty; ask him that that we may be as the stars of Christ, he may see not each star individually, but Christ manifested in beauteous form in the shinings of all combined. This shall be my portion to-day. "The seven stars were in his right hand." How many would like to quench the light of God's ministers! Many criticise; some abuse; more still misrepresent. I can scarcely say a sentence in which I am not

misconstrued; and I do aver that I have often taken Cobbett's rule to speak not only so that I could be understood, but so that I thought I could not be misunderstood. And yet I am. But what mattereth it? What signifieth it? Still if the stars make not glad the eyes of men, if they be in the Lord's hand they ought to be satisfied: they should rest content and not trouble themselves. Loud let the waves roar; and let the envious sea send up her boisterous billows to quench the heavenly fires. Aha, O sea! Upon their tranquil couches sleep the stars; they look down upon they boisterous waves; and when they storm shall all subside in clam, and the clouds that have risen from thy vapour have passed away, be it the lone star or one of a constellation; it shall shine out yet again, and smile on they placid waters till thou, O ocean, shalt mirror the image of that star, and thou shalt know that there is an influence, even in that envied spark, which thou hast sought to quench, to lead thy floods, and make them ebb, and make them flow, so that thou shalt be servant to one whom thou thoughtest to put out for ever. The seven stars are in Christ's right hand.

I shall not detain you much longer, but we must finish this wonderful description. "Out of his mouth went a sharp two edged sword." I have looked at one or two old pictures, in which the artists of the olden time have tried to sketch this vision. I think it a most ridiculous thing to attempt. I conceive that this was never meant to be painted by any human being; nor can it be; but one old artist seems to have caught the very idea. He represents the breath of Christ in vapor, assuming the form of a two edged sword, very mighty, and strong to cut in pieces his adversary. Now, as the gospel of Christ must be heard, because it is "the voice of many waters," so it must be felt, for it is "a two edged sword;" and it is surprising how the gospel really is felt, too. It is felt by those who hate it; they writhe under it; they cannot sleep after it; they feel indignant;

they are horrified, they are disgusted, and all that; but still there is a something within which does not let them remain quiet. That two edged sword gets at the marrow of their bones. They wish they had never heard the Word, though they can never, never heal themselves of the wound they have gotten by it. And to those who are blessed under the Word – what a two-edged sword it is to them! How it kills their self-righteousness! How it cuts the throat of their sins! How it lays their lusts dead at the feet of Jesus! How all-subduing is it in the soul! No sword of Gideon was ever so potent against a horde of Midianites, as the sword that cometh out of Jesus' lips against the hosts of our sins. When the Spirit of God comes in all his power into our souls, what death it works, and yet what life! – what death to sin, and yet what new life in righteousness! O holy sword! O breath of Christ! Enter into our hearts and kill thou our sins.

It is delightful to see each day how the preaching of the Word is really the sword of God. I do sometimes retire from the pulpit sorrowing exceedingly, because I cannot preach as I would, and I think that surely the Master's message has had no speed among you. But it is perfectly marvelous how many here have been called by grace. I am each day more and more astonished when I see high and low, rich and poor, nobles and peasants, moral and immoral, alike subdued before this conquering sword of Christ. I must tell it to the Master's honour, to the Master's glory, "His own right hand hath gotten him the victory," and here the slain of the Lord have been many; here hath he glorified himself in the conversion of multitudes of souls.

But to conclude. "His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." How can I picture this? Go abroad and fix your eye upon the sun if you can; select the day of the year in which he is most in the zenith, and then fix your steady gaze upon him. Doth he not blind you, are you not overwhelmed? But mark, when you can gaze at that sun with undimmed eye, you

shall even then have no power to look upon the countenance of Christ. What glory, what majesty, what light, what spotlessness, what strength! – “His countenance is as the sun that shineth in his strength.” Well may the angels veil their faces with their wings; well may the elders offer vials full of odours sweet, that the smoke of their incense may be a medium through which they may see his face; and well may you and I feel and say, that

*“The more his glories strike our eyes,
The humbler we must lie.”*

But, Jesus, turn thy face and look thou on us. ‘Tis midnight, but if thou turnest thy face, it must be noon, for thy face is as the sun. Thick darkness and long nights have overwhelmed our spirits, and we have said, “I am shut out from the Lord for ever!” Jesus! Turn thy face, and we are troubled no more. Thou sea of love, where all our passions roll; thou circle, where all our joys revolve; thou centre of our souls, – shine thou, and make us glad. This sun, if we look at it curiously to understand its glory, may blind us; but if we look at it humbly, that we may receive its light, it will make our eyes stronger than they were, and shed sunlight into the thickest darkness of our despair.

Oh, Church of God! What sayest thou to him who is thy husband? Wilt thou not forsake thine own kindred and thy father’s house? Wilt thou not long to know him more and more, and shall it not be thy cry to-day, “Mount thy chariot, Jesus! Mount thy chariot! Ride forth, conquering and to conquer! Show thy face, and the darkness of superstition must melt before thy countenance. Open thy mouth, and let the two-edged sword of thy Spirit slay thy foes! Come forth, Jesus; bear the seven stars, and let them shine where light was never seen before! Speak, Jesus, speak! And men must hear thee; for thy

voice is as ‘the sound of many waters.’ Come, Jesus, come, even though thou bring the burning heat with thee, and we as thy feet glow in the furnace! Come, look on us, and burn up all our sins with those eyes of fire! Come, show thyself, and we will adore thee; ‘for thy head and thy hair are white like wool!’ Come, manifest thyself, and we will trust thee; with thy garment, thy priestly garment, we will reverence thee; and with thy golden girdle we will adore thee, King of kings, and Lord of lords! Come, then, that we may see thee, that thou mayest put the crown upon thy head, and the shout may be heard – ‘Hallelujah! Hallelujah! The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!’”

FIVE WITH GOLDEN GIRDLE GIRT

SERMON PUBLISHED MARCH 15, 1917

*He was "girt about the paps with a golden
girdle."*

REVELATION 1:13

BE assured, my brethren, the more real Jesus Christ is to us the more power there will be in our religion. Those men whose religion lies in believing certain doctrines, and contending for certain modes of expression, may be strong enough in bigotry, but they often fail entirely in developing the spirit of true Christianity. There may be minds so constituted that they can live under the power of an idea, and they might possibly be able to die for it. But these, I think, must be comparatively few. To draw out enthusiasm among men, there must generally be a man as leader and commander in whom the people can implicitly trust, to whom they will voluntarily tender obedience. Individual men have wrought wonders. The thoughts which they

incarnated may have been in themselves strong, yet their strength was never so forcible as when the men who represented those thoughts were present to give them currency. Then the blood of the many was stirred, and every man's heart beat high. The presence of Oliver Cromwell in a regiment was equal to any ten thousand men. He had only to appear, and all his soldiers felt so sure of victory, they would dash upon the cavaliers as some mighty tornado, driving them like chaff before the wind. The presence of Napoleon at any moment in a battle was almost sufficient to turn the scale. Let but "the little corporal" appear and wave his sword, and men seemed to lose all sense of their own personal danger, and rushed into the very mouth of death to gain the victory. In those old days of the Huguenots when they were warring for their liberties, what shouts there were, what beating of hearts, what a glamour of trumpets, what exultation, when Henry of Navarre came riding down the ranks! Then each man felt he had a giant's arm, and, as he rode to battle, struck home for God and for the truth as he gave out his watchword, "Remember St. Bartholomew!"

Now the force of the religion of Jesus, under God the Holy Spirit, it seems to me, is never fully brought out except when our faith greets the Lord Jesus Christ as a person, and holds to him as a personal leader and commander, loving him and devoting ourselves to him as an ever-living, ever-gracious Friend. It is not by believing a set of ideas, and trying to be enthusiastic over them, that our courage rises or our prowess succeeds. Rather let us feel his presence, though we cannot see his face, and remembering that there is such an one as Jesus of Nazareth, who became a babe in Bethlehem for us; who lived, and toiled, and suffered for us; then laid bare his breast to the spear, and gave up his life for us. We grow strong when we thus think of him as our Savior, when his thorn — crowned head

risers before our mind's eye, when we look into that face so marred with shame, and pain, and cruelty, till we are constrained to cry out, "Oh! my Savior, I love thee, and for the love I bear thy name would fain learn what I can do to honor thee, and I will do it; point out to me how much of my substance I should place upon shine altar, and I will be glad to place it there put me into the place of suffering if needs be, and I will account it a place of honor; for if thou be there, I can look into thy dear face, and think that I am suffering for thee; fire shall be then like a bed of roses to me, and death itself seem sweeter far than life."

We want to have more open testimony concerning the person of our Lord Jesus Christ; I am persuaded of that; and we have need, private Christians, to live more in fellowship with him, the Son of God, the Man Christ Jesus, who hath redeemed us from wrath, and through whose life we live. To him now — to him exclusively let all your thoughts be turned. Oh! that ye may discern the image which stood on that Lord's Day clearly before the view of John, the eyes of your understanding being opened, and your whole soul being attent to the revelation. It is but one part of John's description of our Lord Jesus Christ in heaven to which I propose to direct your attention. "He was girt about the breast a golden girdle." What did this golden girdle signify? And what are the golden lessons to be gathered from it?

I. The Golden Girdle.

What did it mean? It was designed, first, to set forth our lord's excellence in all his offices. He is a prophet. The prophets of old were often girt about with leathern girdles; but our Savior wears a golden girdle, for he, above all other prophets, is vested with authority. What he declares and testifies is true; yea, it is

pure truth, unalloyed with tradition or superstition. He makes no mistakes. There is no treachery to taint his teaching. Sitting at his feet, you may accept every word he utters as infallible. You need not raise a question about it. The girdle of golden truth is round about him. He is also a priest. The high priest of old wore a girdle of many colors for glory and for beauty. Our Lord Jesus Christ wears a girdle superior to this. It is of the pure gold, for among the priests he hath no peer. Of all the sons of Aaron, none could vie with him. They must first offer a sacrifice for their own sins. They needed to wash their feet in the laver, and to be themselves touched with the cleansing blood. But Jesus Christ is without spot, or blemish, or any such thing.

“Their priesthood ran through several bands
For mortal was their race.”
For mortal was their race.”

But Jesus is immortal, and about him he wears the golden girdle to show that he excels all the priests of Aaron's line. As for those persons who, in modern times, pretend to be priests, our Lord Jesus Christ is not to be mentioned in the same day with them. They are all deceivers. If they knew the truth, they would understand that there is no class of priests now. All caste of priesthood is for ever abolished. Every man that fears God, and every woman, too, is a priest, according to the word which is written, “He hath made us kings and priests unto God.” The priesthood is common to all the saints, and not confined to some. But he wears a golden girdle among them. Their priesthood would be nothing without his. He hath made them priests. They derive their priesthood entirely from him, neither could they be acceptable before God if they were not accepted in the Beloved. He is a King as well as a prophet and a priest, and that girdle, being made of gold, signifies his supremacy over

all other kings. He is mightier far than they; "the Lord mighty in battle. "King of Kings" is his name, and the burden of the music of heaven is this, "King of kings, and Lord of lords." The day shall come when he shall grasp his scepter and break the kingdoms of earth like potters' vessels with his rod of iron. He is this day King of the Jews, but he shall openly be so proclaimed. In that day kings shall bow down before him, and he shall gather up sheaves of sceptres, while many crowns shall be upon his glorious brow. There is no kingdom like the kingdom of Christ. Other kingdoms and go like the hoar-frost of the morning, or the sheen upon the midnight waves; but his kingdom standeth for ever and ever; it shall endure from everlasting to everlasting. As Prophet, Priest, and King, he wears a girdle of gold to show his supremacy in office above all others.

The golden girdle, moreover, bears witness to his power and authority. Men were often girt with girdles when they received office. The Prophet Isaiah saith of Ediakim that he received a girdle of power and dominion. Keys were hung upon the girdle. The housewife's girdle with her keys signified her authority over her servants. The keys at the girdle of great men signified their power in their various offices, and when we sometimes sing: —

"Lo, in his hand the sovereign keys
Of heaven, and death, and hell,"

we recognize this meaning of Christ's golden girdle, that all power given unto him in heaven and in earth. He is the universal Lord. Up in heaven he enjoys an authority that is undisputed. Angels bow before him, and on the sea of glass they cast down their crowns and cry, "Hallelujah!" Here on earth all Providence is ruled by the man whose hand was pierced. All this dispensation is an economy of mediatorial

government, over which Jesus Christ presides. He putteth down one and setteth up another. He makes the wheels of Providence revolve. Everything occurreth according to his decree and purpose; in all things he ruleth, and he overruleth them for the good of his Church, even as Joseph governed Egypt for the good of the seed of Abraham. What a comfort it is, beloved, for us to think of the authority and the power of our Lord Jesus Christ! He who had not where to lay his head; he who was despised and rejected of men; he who was a working man — the carpenter's son; he who felt the pangs of hunger, and endured the pains of weariness; he who was neglected, condemned, opposed, and cast out by his countrymen and his kinsmen it is he who is now undisputed Master and unrivalled Lord everywhere. No name so famous as that once branded with infamy, the name of Jesus. Whom sinful men rejected, holy angels now adore. On earth he was condemned and crucified; in heaven he is hailed with highest honor. Look up to that golden girdle. See how he descended, step by step, into the meanest depths of humiliation; then mark how he ascended with rapid flight to the towering heights of exaltation. Follow him. With him take your lot. Be willing to be made of no repute in this day of reproach that you may be a partaker of his glory in the day of his appearing.

Girt thus about with a golden girdle, we have a vivid representation of his activity. The girdle was used by the Easterns to bind up their long flowing robes. The Hebrew did not usually wear a girdle indoors. It was only when on a journey, or when engaged in some manual labor that he thus adjusted his attire. So our Lord's having a golden girdle signifies that he is still ready to serve his servants, to engage on their behalf. You remember how he once took towel and girded himself. That was with kind intent to wash their feet. Now it is no more with a linen towel, but with a girdle of gold that he prepares himself

to work on the behalf of his beloved. He stands not in heaven with flowing garments, as though all work were done, but he stands there girt about the breast that he may be ready still, and show himself strong on behalf of his people. Be this your comfort now, Jesus has not forgotten to plead for you before his Father's throne. He never holds his peace, and never will. As long as you have a cause to plead, Christ will be your intercessor. Whatsoever you want, he is waiting to supply. As long as you have a sin to confess, Christ will be your advocate with the Father to purge your guilt and purify your souls. As long as you are persecuted on earth, there will be a Christ to represent you in heaven. As long as you are in this vale of tears, he, with golden girdle girt, will be the angel of God's presence to succor and to save you. In all your afflictions he was afflicted, and he will still bear and carry you as in the days of old. Oh! my brethren, how people do sometimes talk about the Christian Church, as if Jesus Christ, who died for us, were still dead!

What gloomy forebodings I have read during the last few months! Not that I have believed a word, or taken dreams for disasters. I have not even credited their sadness with over-much sincerity. I rather thought they wrote for a party purpose, with motives of policy. Were we to believe half we read, Protestantism, in a few years, would become vestige. We might have the Pope preaching in St. Paul's Cathedral. Not a few would be doomed to burn in Smithfield, and know not what pains and penalties we shall be subject to. Evidently the Church of Christ is quite unable to take care of herself. Unless she be provided with so many hundreds or thousands of pounds, she must go to the dogs; for money, the love of which used to be the root of all evil, somehow or other, is found out to be the root of all good. As for the good men who have prayed earnestly and worked so zealously, they are all going to leave off praying, and preaching too, when the State pay is stopped. So all the piety

towards God, and all the good will towards men, will come to an end. Well, I suppose this would be very likely if Jesus Christ were dead, but as long as he is alive, I think he is quite able to take care of the golden candlesticks himself; and the Church of God will probably be no worse in the next few years than it has been in the years that have passed. Nay, I will venture to prophesy that the less help she seeks from the world, and the more she leans upon her God, the brighter will her future be. Should the very foundations of society be shaken, and the worst calamities befall us, such as hope will never come, yet over the ashes of all earthly renown and government patronage, the supernal splendor of immortal Church of God would glow forth with clearer brilliance and brighter glory. Long has she been like a ship tossed with tempest, and not comforted. She has ploughed her way, and the spray that has broken over her has been blood-red with martyr's gore, but she has still kept on her course towards her desired haven. He that is with her is greater than all they that be against her. So shall it be till the world's end. Look, then, beloved, to the golden girdle of our Lord Jesus Christ, and as you perceive that he is still active to maintain his own cause, to deliver his people and to prosper his Church, you need not be afraid. And does not the golden girdle imply his enduring love? The breast was of old time, and still is among ourselves, supposed to be the dwelling-place of the affections. What, think ye, is the ruling passion in the heart of Christ? What is it that inflames the bosom of him who was once the Man of Sorrows, but now is lying of kings and Lord of fords He is girt about the breast with a girdle of gold. Me never ceases to love his people. The girdle is an endless thing; it goes right round a man. Christ's heart always keeps within the sacred circle of undiminished, unchanging, undying affection for all whom his Father gave him, for all whom he bought with his precious blood. Never doubt the faithfulness of Christ to

you, beloved, since faithfulness is the girdle of his loins. Never think that a promise will fail, or that the covenant will be broken. Trusting in him, you will never be suffered to perish. It cannot be. While he wears that golden girdle he cannot prove faithless. That heavenly decoration is a goodly order. Invested therewith, he cannot forget or prove untrue to those whom he has engaged to protect. Though heaven and earth shall pass away, not one word of grace shall fall to the ground. The sun and moon shall expire; dim with age, they will cease to shed their light abroad, but the love of Jesus Christ shall be as fresh and new as in the day of his espousals, and as delicious as when you first tasted of it. Yours shall it be for ever and ever to inherit and enjoy.

In days of yore, moreover, the girdle was the place where the Eastern kept his money; it was his purse. Some of the Orientals keep their cash in their turbans; in our Savior's day it was carried in the girdle. When our Lord speaks in Matthew about his disciples going without purse or scrip, he mentions there that they are not to — carry silver or gold in their girdles. This golden girdle, then to use a simple word, may represent the purse of the Lord Jesus, and we infer from its being golden that it is full of wealth unequalled, and riches unsurpassed. Jesus Christ bears about him all the available supplies that can be needed by his people. What a multitude of people he has to support, for on him all his saints do depend. They have been drawing upon him all their lives long, and so they always will. They are gentlemen commoners," as one used to say, upon the bounty of God's Providence. We are pensioners upon the beneficence of our Lord Jesus Christ; he has supplied us hitherto until now. Oh! how much grace you and I have wanted to keep us from starving, from sinking, from going down to the pit! And we have had all we needed! In fearful temptations, our foot has not slipped. We have passed through many trials, but

without being crushed. Arduous has been our service; but as our day our strength has been. We should long ago have broken any earthly bank, and drained the exchequer; but Christ has been to us like an ever-flowing fountain, a well-head, a redundant source, communicating enough and to spare. What a purse! What ready relief for every emergency Christ has ever at command! Oh! brethren, have you little grace? Whose fault is it? Not your Lord's. Oh! you that have no spending money! you who are full of doubts and fears! you who have slender comfort and little joy! you who are saying, like the elder son in the parable, "Thou never gavest me a kid that I might make merry with my friends" — whose fault is it? Does not your Father say, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is shine"? It you are poor in spiritual things, you make yourselves poor, singe, Christ is yours; and with him all things are yours. Do enjoy what God has given you. Take the good that God provides. Seek to live up to your privileges. Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice! As that golden girdle gleams from afar, say in your spirit: —

"Since Christ is rich, can I be poor?
What can I want besides?"

And now let me briefly point out to you :

II. The Golden Lessons to be gathered from these five meanings of the golden girdle.

It will refresh your memories if I remind you that we showed how the golden girdle set forth the excellency of Christ in all his offices. The golden lesson, then, is — Admire him in all his offices. He that loves Christ will never be tired of hearing about him. Doubtless when Jacob's sons came back and told him that

Joseph was lord over all Egypt, after hearing the story once, the old man would be sure to say, "Oh! tell me that again! I will be bound to say that as he sat in that tent of his, he would ask first one and then another to tell the tale; so would he try to pump them with questions. "Tell me, Judah, now how did he look? Has he grown stouter or thinner since the day he left me, and I never thought to see or hear of him any more? Tell me, Simeon, did he sit on a throne? Was he really like a king? Tell me, Levi, what did the Egyptians seem to think of him? Had they a high estimation of his character? Tell me, Zebulun, how did he speak? In what terms did he speak of his old father? Was there a tear in his eye when he referred to Benjamin, your other brother, the little one whom his father would not spare? " Surely I might draw that picture without being suspected of exaggeration. It would be all true. He loved his son so dearly and doted upon him so fondly that he could not know too much; nay, he could not know enough about him. Anybody that had anything to tell about Joseph would be sure to be welcome . So with every renewed heart. If there is anything to be learned about Jesus, you will want to know it. Dear brethren, let us cultivate this spirit more and more. Let us live in the study of the life of Jesus. These are things the angels desire to look into. Do you not desire to look into them too? Watch your Master. Let your experience, as it alters and ripens, reveal to your fresh beauties in your Lord. As you turn over page, after page, of Scripture, search after Jesus in it as men search after gold, and be not content unless you see your Savior's face revealed in every page.

Does the, girdle indicate his power and authority? The golden lesson is that ye trust him. If all power is his, lean on him. We do not lean on Christ enough. The remark of the Church was, "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning on her Beloved? " Lean on him. He will never sink

under your weight. All the burdens that men ever had to carry, Christ carried, and he certainly will carry yours. There can be no wars and lightings that perplex you which did not perplex him, for in the great fight which comprehended yourselves, and the great warfare for all his saints, he overcame. Nothing, then, can be difficult to him. How often we weary ourselves with walking when we might ride — I mean, we carry our troubles when we might take them to Christ. We fret, and groan, and cry, and our difficulties do not get any the less, but when we leave them with him who careth for us, and begin to trust, like a child trusts its father, how light of heart and how strong of spirit we become! The Lord give us to watch that golden girdle carefully, and as we see the power of Jesus Christ may we come to lean upon that power, and trust him at all times.

Or did the golden girdle signify his activity? The golden lesson is that we imitate him. Christ is in heaven, and yet he wears a girdle. Christian, always keep your girdle round your loins. “Stand, therefore, with your loins girt about,” says the Apostle, “and your lamps trimmed.” This is not the place for the Christian to unbind. Heaven is the place of rest for us; not this world of temptation and of sin. Still, stand ready to suffer or to serve. At the Master’s gate watch and wait to do his bidding. Never, on week-days, and much less on Sabbath days, let your spirits be out of order for Christian service. We ought so to live that, if called to die at any minute, we should not need to say a prayer — ready for heaven, ready for a life of service or for a death of glory. The true way for a Christian to live in this world is to be always as he would wish to be if Christ came at that moment, and there is a way of living that style simply depending upon the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, and then going out into daily service for him, moved by love to him, Saying to him, “Lord, show me what thou wouldst have me to do.” I wish we always were as I have thus said we always

should be. The Lord can teach us; let us ask him to teach us the lesson.

We told you, moreover, that the golden girdle indicated his enduring love, inasmuch as it is girt about his breast. Well, then, the golden lesson is, let us love him in return. Let us wear the golden girdle too. Oh! beloved, love him with all your heart, and soul; and strength. Let no rival come between you and Jesus. Keep your heart chaste for the Well-Beloved. My greatest longing is that I may present you as a chaste virgin unto Christ, that there may be nothing by way of error in respect to doctrine or to holiness of life that may disturb the full union of your souls with Jesus. Oh! to see that golden girdle, and an we see it to feel that he has belted us about after the self-same manner! “I am my Beloved’s, and my Beloved is mine.” I am not the world’s, nor is the world for me; but I belong to Jesus, and Jesus belongs to me. May that be the deep feeling and the truthful expression of every one of you.

And then does the golden girdle suggest to is the wealth of Christ, as being his purse, let it be our golden lesson to rejoice in him. If he be so rich, and all that he is, and all that he has belongs to us, bring hither your choicest music and let your souls be glad in the name of the Lord. Why art thou bowed down? Why distressed? Has thy Lord withdrawn, or has he changed; is he deaf, or is his arm shortened that he cannot deliver? Nay, but let the children of God be joyful in their King. If you cannot be glad in what is created, be glad in the Creator himself. If you cannot drink of the streams, go and drink of the fountain-head; the water is sweeter and better there. Blessed wreck which makes us lose everything and cling to our God, for the loss will be a gain if we get nearer to God, love him better, and prize his friendship more.

Ah! me, the day will come when those of you who love not Christ will have to look on him, and you will see that golden

girdle then, but it will bring no comfort to you; you despised him, hence in that girdle there will be no love to you, no blessing for you, no power for you. But what will there be? Why, that very girdle, since it is made of faithfulness, will show him faithful to his threatenings. Those who hear Christ preached and reject him will find that word true, "He that believeth not shall be damned." Nothing but condemnation can be the lot of the man who contemns pardon, and treats forgiveness with contempt. When simply to trust Christ saves the soul, to distrust him is the direst and most damnable of sins. It is suicidal. Unbeliever, thou refuses to pass through the only door that can lead thee to heaven. Well, man if thou never enter there, thy blood be on thine own head. Oh! that grace may lead thee just now to seek salvation! The man with the golden girdle can save thee, and none but he. Look to him. Behold him as he hangs upon the tree with hands and feet fastened there. Look and trust — trust and live. The Lord incline your hearts to espouse and not eschew his rich mercy, for his own dear name's sake.

Amen.

SIX
LESSONS FROM THE CHRIST OF
PATMOS

SERMON GIVEN AUGUST 7, 1887

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 1:16

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 33

*“And he had in his right hand seven stars: and
out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged
sword: and his countenance was as the sun
shineth in his strength.”*

REVELATION 1:16.

WE have carefully read John's description of the manner in which his Lord and Master revealed his glory to him. The figure is colossal, and I had almost said inconceivable. It would be quite impossible to draw a picture from the apostle's words. If any artist were to try to set it forth with his pencil, the figure would be singularly grotesque, and strangely unlike the idea which John intended to convey. How could anyone picture the

voice like the noise of many waters? Or depict the feet as if they burned in a furnace? To make the portrait technically accurate would be extremely difficult, if not impossible; and the draughtsman would surely lose the spiritual ideal in endeavouring to give it shape. The fact is, that the details of this celestial vision are deeply instructive, but there is no impression left upon the mind by it as a whole — I mean no impression which a man could translate to his fellow. Probably the seer of Patmos was himself unable to form an idea of what he saw; we know that he swooned at the amazing sight. He was utterly overwhelmed, and though he wrote under divine command he wrote of things beyond himself, and beyond all human minds.

The impression produced by one part of the vision inevitably obliterates that of other parts. Take, for instance, the expression, "His eyes are as a flame of fire." Can you get the idea? Then add to it the further one — "his countenance," which of course includes the eyes, "is as the sun shineth in his strength." You lose the brightness of the flames of fire in the superior glory of the sun: the eyes disappear as separate objects when the full countenance is seen in its overwhelming glory.

The vision is spiritual, and you can take each point in detail and learn from it; but it presents to us no resemblance such as can be drawn upon canvas: it is, as a whole, beyond the grasp of imagination. John might almost have said, after all he had seen, "I saw no similitude"; for, what he did see, albeit it was a gathering up of rich and rare similitudes, could not be made into a single image which could be represented to the eye, or to the mind. In this I greatly rejoice; for in it I perceive the prudence of the only wise God our Saviour.

The tendency of the human mind is to idolatry. When we do not seek after another god we are still tempted to worship the true God under some visible, tangible form; and this is directly opposed to the divine will. The leaning of our evil

heart is towards some form, symbol, or imagery which we judge may help our thought and intensify our worship. All this comes of evil, and leads to evil. Remember the stern command of God, never to be altered, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments." God is a spirit: therefore he is not to be imaged, and we are not to use anything as a help towards our conception of him; for it will be a hindrance, and not a help. That which can be seen or touched is to be kept out of our worship of the invisible God; for there is really nothing to which we can liken him: the very attempt at likeness-making in reference to him is profanity. I know the common excuse, that men do not worship the image, but that by its means they are Helped to worship God; but this is exactly what the second commandment forbids. Carnal objects are not helps to spiritual worship: they are snares to the mind, and lead the heart away from God. I feel my soul horrified, and my blood boiling with indignation, when I see in what are called Protestant churches, not only a material altar, which is treated with honour, but upon it a cross to which idolatrous reverence is evidently paid by those who bow as they pass before it. It is very usual nowadays to see also the *Agnus Dei*, or a small figure of a lamb; and this, like the figure of a calf among the Israelites, is viewed with devotion. Why, we are not only going back to Popery, we are reverting to Paganism! I do not care what shape your image takes, whether it be a cross, a crucifix, or an *Agnus Dei*: if it is anything to be seen or handled, it is strictly forbidden in the worship of God.

Had the portrait of our Lord been a suitable subject for reverence —and I can conceive of nothing for which greater claim can be put in— we should have had his likeness preserved to us by the special care of the good Spirit, who is ever mindful of the edification of saints; but we have neither painting nor statuary of any authority, nor, indeed, any which can be supposed to depict his matchless form. If this best of images is denied us, let us not tolerate the idols of human invention. The hammers of iconoclasts might find good work in breaking those images in pieces which now pollute our churches. Take these things hence; they are not becoming in the house of God; they do not help us towards spiritual worship, but they become grievous offences to a jealous God, who counts such worship a spiritual adultery by which his own worship is defiled.

Do not imagine that the Jews in the wilderness, when they made what Moses calls a calf, really intended to pay divine honours to the image of a bull. They had learned in Egypt that the bull was the most venerable of all symbols of Deity: it is the embodiment of strength, and therefore it appeared fit to represent the power of God. They paid in effect — “We will adore the unseen power of God under the image of the useful and powerful ox”; so they made an image of an ox out of their most precious things, and they said, “These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of Egypt.” Moses did not treat this ritualism with respect, but with indignation. He calls the ox a calf; for it was newly born, and but little in stature. He called it in grim ridicule “a calf,” and therein he set us an example; for objects of idolatrous worship should be treated by us with scorn, lest in any degree we partake in the crime of idolatry. We must keep ourselves from idols. When the Philistines called their god the God of Flies, the Jews ridiculed him as the God of Dung, thus showing their abhorrence of the imaginary deity. I do not blame our Reforming and Puritan fathers that they used

names of ridicule and contempt for those things which Romanism has degraded into idols; for even the most sacred things lose all sacredness when elevated into objects of adoration, whatever may be the motive which leads to so great a crime. I may admire the sincerity which kisses the wounds of the crucifix, but I must none the less abhor the idolatry of the deed, and feel a horror of the image. Did not Hezekiah break in pieces even the brazen serpent when it became an object of worship? He called it *Nehushtan*, that is, a mere bit of brass. If ever there was a piece of brass which deserved religious regard from men it was that brazen serpent, by which so many had been healed. When used aright it was God's channel of blessing, but when idolized it was broken in pieces as so much old metal. I feel glad, therefore, that even when the Lord Christ revealed himself so specially to the mind of John it was in a spiritual and symbolic manner, and the wonderful similitudes used were of such a character that it is not possible to construct from them a figure which could be set up for purposes of worship.

My brethren, though we pay no homage to an outward and visible revelation, yet to him who thus revealed himself we ascribe all honour, and glory, and majesty, and power, and dominion, for ever and ever. Unto him whom as yet our eyes cannot see, unto him who dwelleth in light unapproachable, very God of very God, even Christ Jesus our Saviour, we pay the homage of our full and grateful hearts, not only now, but world without end.

Having thus removed your minds from any gross and carnal notion that our Lord is actually what this vision describes, I beg you to note that the spiritual teaching is all the more to be sought out and treasured up. I invite you to consider three of those similitudes by which the Lord Christ is set before us in this divine Revelation. They stand in very significant relation-

ship the one to the other. "He had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." These are not only in one verse by the will of the translators, but they were intimately connected in the mind of John, and were intended to come to us together, blended and united.

I. Learn from the first sentence THE POSITION OF INSTRUMENTALITY IN REFERENCE TO OUR LORD JESUS: "He had in his right hand seven stars." The stars are said to be the angels, or messengers, or, as many conceive, the ministers whom God used as messengers to the churches, and from the churches to the outlying world. The word may mean the entire instructive and enlightening gift of the church, whether found in one person or in many. God has ordained that there shall be men anointed of his Spirit, who shall, beyond others, be the means of conversion and edification, and these are as stars in the sky of the church.

Note well, that instrumentality is of temporary use, and is intended for the time of darkness. Churches themselves are "golden candlesticks," and candlesticks answer their purpose best at night. When the sun is up, and the full day has come, do we need lamps? No; the church militant has her reason for existence upon earth in the fact of the surrounding darkness. The ministers of the gospel, what are they? Necessary to Christ? By no means, for the sun does not need the stars. They are necessary to the present darkness, with which they are to struggle as burning and shining lights until the Lord himself shall shine forth in his glory. The Lord will use instruments till he himself appears, but even those whom he calls "stars" are only the transient apparatus of a passing night.

This should make us think very humbly of ourselves: for, dear brethren, this illustrates our weakness. Were we lights of the first magnitude, the darkness would no longer remain. O

stars! you by whom God shines! O stars! with your sparkling and far-reaching light, making glad the eyes of the benighted! What poor things you are, after all! for with all your shining it still remains night. Lamps of God though you be, you do but relieve the gloom which you cannot remove. If ministers were all they might be, there would soon be an end of them; but the fact of their continued necessity proves their weakness. O ye that serve God best, remember that if you served him better, the day would soon come when no man would say to his fellow, "Know the Lord," for they all should know him, from the least to the greatest. Consider, then, that instrumentality at its best, when used in blessed unity, as a church, is no more than a lamp, or candle; and what can this do as compared with our Lord, who shines as the sun? Instrumentality, when specially selected, enlightened, and upheld, is but as a star; and what can a star do? ay, what can the whole host of stars do, towards turning night into day? This is a good beginning for our consideration of instrumentality, since we are apt to grow proud, and this may teach us lowliness. Whatever honour God may be pleased to put upon his servants by calling them stars, it is evident that they are only wanted because it is night, and that they are far too feeble to cope with that night, and turn its darkness into light.

Still, instrumentality is honourably spoken of by him whose judgment is supremely wise. The Lord Jesus does not despise the agency which he employs. Those whose testimony he blesses for the salvation of men are compared to stars.

Stars are guides, and so are the Lord's true ministers. Some stars in yonder sky have done measureless service to wanderers over the trackless deep, and to those who have lost themselves in the labyrinths of the forest. That pole-star has conducted many a slave to liberty. Happy have been the influences of the stars upon the hopeless who, being lost, have laid themselves

down to die! Blessed are those men who, shining with the light of God, have turned many to righteousness; shall they not shine as the stars for ever and ever? Are there not preachers of the word who have stood like that famous star “over the place where the young child was”? They have first led strangers to Jesus, and then have remained in faithful love shining over the place where the Lord abides. We preach Christ crucified: God forbid that we should preach anything else! We point to Jesus, saying ever, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” Ours is, indeed, an honourable office, to guide wandering feet into the way of peace. Honoured is the least in all our ministry if he may do this.

A certain star, the morning star, is also the herald of the day. All eyes are glad to see the morning star, because they know that the sun is ever near it. Happy messenger of God who has the sound of his Master’s feet behind him! There have been men, and thank God there are such still, through whom God shines with rich promise of eternal day: their ministry heralds the coming of Christ to the heart. They preach so clearly of him, that he is set forth evidently crucified in our assemblies. They hide themselves in their Lord. They have nothing to lift up but Christ, they bring nothing before men’s minds but Christ; their one sole theme is Christ in his first coming cleansing his people from their sins, and Christ in his second coming bringing them home to his glory. Of such men it may be said, “He made the stars also for those are God-made ministers, whose whole witness is for the glory of Christ Jesus.

It is an honourable comparison that the instruments of God’s good pleasure have put upon them in being compared to stars; for the stars are the comfort and solace of the night. Well do men sing, “Beautiful star”; for, amid the surrounding gloom, the twinkling light is a thing of beauty and a joy for ever. “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth

glad tidings!" We do not rightly value the considerable amount of light which comes to the earth through the stars; but were they quite removed, we should soon find the thick darkness of night to be greatly intensified; it might even become like the darkness of Egypt, that might be felt. In the same way we are apt to undervalue regular ministries which do not amaze us by any uncommon brilliance. We could not afford to lose these stars, however feeble their light. Let us thank God for the many ministries, gentle and obscure, which, nevertheless, keep the dense darkness from being utterly impenetrable. Despise not prophesyings. Thank God for all the agencies by which he works. He compares his faithful servants to stars; be sure that you think them heavenly bodies, bearing celestial light, shining from above. They are not so small as some think them, and they are not forgotten of him who calleth them all by their names, and leadeth them out.

Instrumentality is honourably placed; for we see the stars in the right hand of him who is the First and the Last. God's ministers are stars, but not stars up yonder in the sky; they are stars held in the right hand of their great Lord. Oh, what a position is this! God's true servants are in the highest place! His right hand made them. None can make stars but the Maker of all things. It is God who makes ministers of Christ, and gives them light wherewith to shine. Because of this they are honourable in his esteem, and he places them in his right hand. Whatever some may think of faithful preachers, the Lord makes them the men of his right hand. They may be despised by those who oppose the Word, but they need not be ashamed; for while the right hand of God is their position, they are more honourable than the princes and kings of the earth. Dear servants of God, who are serving your Lord in great obscurity, twinkling feebly, and thinking that no one notices you, receiving no honour from men, never mind; for if the Lord God

has given you light, you are precious in his esteem, and he sets you not only at his right hand, but in it. You are where seraphim might wish to be.

See, also, how true instrumentality is graciously sustained. The chosen servants of the Lord are under special protection; for they shine in Christ's right hand. This is where the ministers of Christ need to be; for they stand in the front of the battle, and are in double danger. Their office has its temptations, and even their success has its perils. If you win souls for God, the devil will have a grudge against you. If you preach the word with power, all the hosts of evil will sharpen their arrows, and point their shafts at you. The stars of the churches have need to be in Christ's hand, for all the fiends of hell will puff at them. If they could make a star fall, how greatly would they rejoice! Glory be to him who keeps them all. "For that he is strong in power; not one faileth."

Our Lord Jesus holds the seven stars in his right hand. Does not this teach us the entire dependence of each one of us upon him? Other stars may shine in their own natural spheres, but Christ's stars can only shine as he, by the constant outgoing of his strength, holds them up, and holds them out, and holds them fast. They would cease to be stars if they were not in the Lord's hand. O my friends, who are working for the Lord in church, or mission-hall, or Sunday-school, place no reliance upon yourselves! Do not let your confidence lean upon your own natural abilities, or acquired knowledge, or garnered experience; let your dependence be alone upon that right hand which holds you up. The hand of the glorified Saviour is worth depending upon. Behold an arm that never can be paralyzed, a hand that can never grow weary. Rely not on yourself in any measure or degree, but only upon that right hand of power and skill which will hold you up even to the end.

See, then, beloved, the special security of true instrumen-

tality; for who can extinguish a star whose sphere is the right hand of God? I see the devil puffing against these stars until his cheeks are fit to burst, but he does not even make them flicker: what can harm those whom Jesus keeps? You know how some fine preachers have gone out in darkness, smouldering like candle-wicks, filling the whole chamber of the church with a nauseous smell; and if professed ministers become unholy or untruthful, their end is sad for themselves and mischievous for all who are around them, May God save his church from the smoking flax of dying ministries. Blessed are they who, trusting in God, shine and shine on in his keeping. "Yea, they shall be holden up." Doth he not ordain for them a lamp which shall never be extinguished? Has he not put them where they must be safe?

Instrumentality of the right hind is wisely directed; for it is in the Lord's hand. This generation, like children playing in the marketplace, is not content with the moods and ways of the Lord's servants; but wisdom is justified of her children. The Lord sends by whom he will send. In wisdom and prudence he both kindles his stars and removes them; he arranges their places and their magnitude, their rising and their setting. "All his saints are in thy hand," O Lord Christ, but specially those through whom thou speakest with men! As the judges in Israel came and went at the bidding of infinite wisdom, even so is it among the chosen ministers of the Lord Jesus.

Perhaps you think I am making too much of this subject, but I have no such desire. My design is very practical. The churches should pray that their risen Lord would give them more stars, and that he would uphold the stars that are already given; for there is unquestionably a very close connection between the prosperity of the churches and these stars. Whether it should be so or not is not the question, but the fact is unquestionable— very much depends upon the minister. If

you have a warm-hearted, loving, zealous preacher of the gospel, you find before long earnest, hearty, godly, working people gathered about him; but where there is death in the minister— coldness, lukewarmness, want of zeal, and want of holiness, what do you see? Do not the pews reflect the dreary condition of the pulpit? Is it not so, that like shepherd like sheep? We act and re-act upon each other! Brethren, pray for us. It is my solemn conviction that one great need of the church at the present time is a more faithful ministry. We need fewer fireworks and more stars. One man whom God has given is worth a thousand that a college has made. When God takes a man and says, “Go and preach in the power with which I have endowed you,” that man will accomplish what a host of learned and well-trained men would not dare to attempt. Why have we not more mighty preachers of the word? Because we do not pray for them. Some of our ministers are half afraid that such men should come, for fear they should find themselves outshone. What better gifts can Christ give the church with his own right hand than pastors and evangelists? The church will never make any great advance until once more God sends here and there, and in fifty places, men with burning hearts and with trumpet voices to proclaim the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. We need men that will not yield to the current of the times, nor care one jot about it; but will hold their own and hold their Master’s Word against all comers, because the Lord of hosts is with them, and the Spirit of God resteth upon them. I would have you at this time realize the Christ with the seven stars in his hand, and I would have you pray, “Lord, fill thy hand with stars again. Light up the darkness of this period with flaming preachers of thy word to the praise of the glory of thy grace.” So much about the position of instrumentality: follow me now to kindred themes.

II. And now, in the second place, I want you to notice with

great care THE PLACE OF REAL POWER. Note the second of the three sentences — “And out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword.” The swordpower, the war-strength of the church, does not lie in her ministers. The battle and the victory are not with them, but with their Lord. I have put them in their proper place: I have told you that they are stars, and I have reminded you of their usefulness; but the next symbol prevents your regarding them as forces to be relied on. We read, “Out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword.” Not out of the stars, but out of our Lord’s mouth goes the strength which wins the day.

The true power of the church lies in Christ personally. You may have all the stars that ever made bright the milky way with their combined sheen; but there is no power in them to kill evil, or conquer sin. The stars of the church shine because God makes them shine. Their shining is not their own: it is borrowed light with which they are radiant. But the power that overcomes evil, wounds the hard heart, pierces the conscience and kills reigning sin, is of the Lord alone. “Out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword.” Glory not, therefore, in men; for power belongeth unto God. Boast not in the talent nor in the experience of the man of God, for he can neither kill nor make alive. The power of a church is the presence of her Lord. He has not deposited power in men; he retains it in himself, and from himself we must seek it. Behold the infinite resources of the church; all power is in Jesus, and Jesus is with his people.

The power lies in Christ’s word: “Out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword.” Beloved, the power that wins souls is the word of God; not my explanation of it, nor yours; not my amplification of it, nor yours; not my illustration of it, nor yours. The power is not in the stars, but in the word which made the stars. God’s word is the source of all things. Therefore reckon that every sermon is a wasted sermon which is not Christ’s

word; believe that all theology is rotten rubbish which is not the word of the Lord. Do not be satisfied with going to a place of worship and hearing an eloquent discourse, unless the sum and substance of it is the word of the Lord. My brothers and sisters, whether you teach children or their parents, do not think you have done any good unless you have taught the word of the Lord. For saving purposes we must have the Lord's word, and nothing else. It is not your word, O ye most devoted soul-winners; it is not your word, O ye most impassioned evangelists; it is not your word, O ye most plaintive persuaders; it is the word of the Lord, and that alone, which will abide, and subdue all things to itself. The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon: we can do all things with it, we can do nothing without it.

And notice again, that it is not only his word, but it is his word as he himself speaks it. Does Christ then still speak the word in the church? Yes! It is not the truth in the Bible alone which saves; it is that truth taken by the Holy Ghost, and vivified and laid home to the heart. It is not the letter of the word which Jesus spake eighteen hundred years ago which works wonders; but it is that same word as he now delivers it into our ear and heart by his own living, loving, heart-subduing voice. I may speak Christ's words in vain; but he speaks to purpose. The sword in Peter's hand cuts off an ear, but the sword in Christ's mouth slays sin and subdues men to himself. You have heard a sermon full of precious truth, and yet it has done you no good; at another time you have heard the same truth, and it has overwhelmed you by its hallowed power. Whence this difference? Is it not that in one case it was God's word out of the preacher's mouth, and in the other case it was God's word out of his own mouth? Yes, every word is a keen sword to slay sin when Jesus speaks it. My soul melts in repentance when my Beloved speaks to me. Nothing can stand against the word of

Jesus: he speaks, and it is done! O my brethren, I have no faith in my own preaching; but I have all faith in my Lord's speaking. His word shall not return unto him void. Out of his mouth no syllable shall come in vain. I charge you, look away from us, the twinkling stars, to our Lord, whose mouth is the conquering force of his church.

The word is in itself adapted to the divine end, for it is sharp and two-edged; and when it is spoken by the Lord, its adaptation is seen. The gospel is very sharp when the Spirit of God lays it home. No doctrine of men has such piercing power. Take care, O preacher, that you do not blunt the word, or try to cover over its edge; for that would be treason to the Lord who made it to be sharp and cutting. There is much about the true gospel which offends, and it should be our desire never to tamper with it, or to tone it down, lest we become enemies to the Lord's truth. Truth which is meant to offend human pride must be stated in its own way, even though seen to produce anger, and annoy self-righteousness. Doctrine which is cutting and killing must not be concealed or softened down. "He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully, saith the Lord." People are disturbed and troubled by the real gospel: under the false gospel they can sleep into destruction. Bring out the sword: it is made to wound; let it exercise its salutary sharpness. The gospel has two edges, so that none may play with it. When they think to run their fingers along the back of it they will find themselves cut to the bone. Whether we regard its threats or its promises, it cuts at sin. Whether we move it up or down, it makes great gashes in that which ought to be wounded and killed. Let us, therefore, know that the power of the church does not lie anywhere but in the word as Jesus himself speaks it. Let us keep to his own pure, unadulterated, unblunted word, and let us pray him to send it forth with power out of his own mouth into the hearts and consciences of men.

III. May the Holy Spirit fasten this on your memories! I must now conduct you to the third point, which is a very wonderful matter—THE SOURCE OF TRUE GLORY. The source of true glory in a church lies in her enjoying the countenance of her Lord. “His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.” When Jesus is pleased with the church, she enjoys noontide prosperity.

Brethren, endeavour to realize the idea of Christ’s countenance shining as the sun. Let me then remind you of our former themes. Where are the seven stars? They are still in his hand, but I defy you to see them; for when the sun is once up, where are the stars? Ah, dear young people! when you first hear a minister preach with divine power he is everything to you; God enables him to bring light to your darkness, and for a season you rejoice in his light. When you get further on in the road, and come to see the Lord Jesus Christ himself in the divine glory of his blessed person, then you will not glory either in Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas; but you will glory in Jesus only. The stars are twinkling still, but you cannot observe them when the sun shines in noontide splendour; and so the human instrument is as useful as ever, but when Christ himself is fully seen, the instrument takes a place far lower down. We are grateful for the stars, they have had blessed uses for our good; but we cannot mention them in the same day with the sun. Now that we have seen the Lord, we value his servants none the less; but still they are servants, and only servants, and he is Lord of all. An hour of Jesus is better than a year of all the apostles. Personal communion with Jesus is far more powerful for our good than the best preaching in the world.

If you catch the idea of our Lord’s countenance being “as the sun shineth in his strength,” let me ask you where is the sharp two-edged sword which came forth out of his mouth? You have not forgotten it, but at the same time it would be hard to

discern it upon the face of the sun. When we enjoy Christ himself, we do not think the less of his word, but it seems to be absorbed in himself. He himself becomes to us the Logos, the word. Even the gospel itself, glorious as it is, bears no other glory than that which we behold in the face of Jesus Christ. This is the glory which excelleth. This is the glory before which dispensations, and economies, and systems of truth appear to be mere reflections of that which is embodied and epitomized in him. To see the face of our Lord and enjoy his love is to stand, like Milton's angel, in the sun.

I must hurry over places where I am tempted to linger. To the saints the glory of Christ lies in himself: his own countenance is the centre of glory. Consider the work which he has finished, and the reward wherewith his Father has glorified him. Consider his divine nature, and the perfect manhood which he has taken into union with it. Consider all his infinite perfections, but especially his love, his boundless, changeless love to his people. This is the sun which makes our day, and fills us all with joy and gladness. What want we more than his loving favour? I would to God that we were henceforth shut up to his praises, and were bound henceforth to see no beauties but those of our Lord. To think that he should love you, that he should so love you as to die for you, and that having died for you he should go up unto the Father for you, and fill all things for you, and reign in everlasting splendour for you; why, all this is a surpassing glory of love! If you once know that his countenance is towards you, then will you see such a glory in his grace and favour as you have never before imagined. Once behold the splendour of the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord, and you will henceforth need neither candle nor star; for the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus will be as seven suns to you.

Notice that the favour of Christ, if it be enjoyed by a church, is effectual for all purposes. Why do we crave for stars

when the sun shines? In the absence of human instrumentality, the Lord Jesus will more than suffice. Even for those purposes for which the sword goes out of his mouth the Lord's countenance is enough. A sunstroke is as effectual for overcoming as the stroke of a sword. Let Christ shine in the church, and he will destroy his enemies with the brightness of his glory. Let him shine in the church, and you will have all the warmth, and all the joy, and all the delight, that a church can desire. Let him shine in the church, and you will have all the life, and all the growth, and all the sweetness, and all the mellowness, and all the perfectness, that even the garden of the Lord can yield. If our Lord be with us, delighting himself in us, and countenancing our endeavours, we shall, as a church, prosper better than if we had the endowments of the State, the approbation of the wise, and the patronage of the great. To make the church of God the grandest instrumentality conceivable, all that is needed is, that she shall please her Lord in all things, and therefore shall walk in the light of his countenance. "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us." "Cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved." "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance." What a light it is! In the sun's beams we find the most needful and indispensable boons; and in our Lord Jesus we find all things for time and for eternity. When the Sun of Righteousness arises, he brings healing in his wings. Then we are made strong, so that we go forth and grow up like calves of the stall. Let the Lord show us his face, and we have reached the height of our desires.

Yet note well that the brightness of our Lord cannot be measured, neither could his glory be endured of mortal men if once it were fully revealed. "His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." John therefore could not gaze upon that countenance, but fell at his Lord's feet as dead. It would be

a dangerous thing for you to stand still and attempt to gaze upon the sun. To turn a telescope full upon the sun, and place your eye to the glass, would be the extreme of folly. Our eye must be shielded, or it cannot look on the sun. And, beloved, if the Lord Jesus were to manifest himself to us as he really is, in all his unveiled majesty, we should die with excess of joy. If he were to turn the whole stream of his love into our hearts, our frail bodies would be unable to bear the blissful excitement which would follow upon such a heavenly discovery. You do know something of him, and you are pining to know more; and well you may, for your life lies that way; but still, he must always be the best judge of how much he shall reveal: for "he knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust." He holds himself in reserve until we are prepared to receive the amazing bliss of his glorious manifestation. Perhaps even in eternity he will have to hide himself somewhat; for there is in him such greatness that our littleness would fail before him were his glory all revealed. Oh, cry to him to show himself to you, but still do not marvel if he answereth thee, "Thou canst not see my face and live." That holy man, Mr. Walsh, when the Lord revealed himself to him, was obliged to cry, "Hold, Lord! remember I am but an earthen vessel; and if I have more of this delight I must die." One said he would like to die of that disease, and I am very much of his mind. They say, "See Naples and die"; but to improve on it, another said, "See Naples and live"; and truly this is the better sight of the two. I would fain see my Lord so as to live to his praise. Oh, for such a vision as should shape my life, my thought, my whole being, till I became like my Lord! Oh, to see him so as to be changed into his image from glory unto glory! Perhaps some of us may even die in this sweet fashion, by the Lord's letting in of his glory upon our souls in such a torrent that we shall be washed away into the bottomless sea of infinite delight. He may please to pull

up the sluice gates, and let the sea of glory in upon the marshy places of our dying hours. The little river of our life goes rippling down towards the sea, and in our closing hour its stream runs low: just then the tide from the shoreless sea comes up the river to meet the stream, and then the river-bed is filled by the fulness of the ocean. You shall realize that parable when heart and flesh are failing, and the Lord comes in to be your portion for ever.

Yet once again, brethren: if Christ's face be so bright, then we know where to trace all the light and all the glory that we have ever seen or known. Is there any beauty in the landscape? It is the sun that makes it beautiful. Is there any brightness in any object round about us? It is the sun that makes it bright. If it were dark, you would behold no scenery, and observe no beauty. Darkness is the grave of beauty, and the absence of Jesus would be the end of all human virtue. Is there any sweetness, excellence, holiness, goodness, grace about anything on earth? It comes from Jesus only. Attribute it to him, then, and bless his name.

Rejoice also, you that behold his face, and live in communion with him; for your faces, also, will shine. You may look at yonder seven stars very long ere you are made to reflect their light; but, dear friends, if you see Jesus, and abide in the light of his countenance habitually, your faces, your characters, your lives, will grow resplendent, even without your knowing it. We read that Moses wist not that his face shone; all saw it but himself. The sons of men will wonder where you have been to have gathered such brightness. I know some few men and women who seem to carry about with them the fragrance of the ivory palaces; there is a perfume about their words, their actions, and their very selves. All nostrils do not enjoy the aroma of holiness, but the heart of the spiritual man is refreshed thereby. One cries: "Whence came this perfume? Oh, that I

had it! Oh, that such fragrance were shed abroad in my life! I have heard that in the old times, when they would attract doves to a certain pigeon-house, they took certain birds and smeared their wings with a costly perfume, and sent them forth. Other pigeons were so delighted with their sweetness that they followed them to the dove-cotes. Oh, that you and I may be so sweetened by dwelling near to Christ that others may come with us to see Jesus and his love! At any rate, may we so look on the Well-beloved that our own faces may shine, and others beholding our brightness shall glorify our Father which is in heaven!

God bless you, beloved. I wish we were in a better frame of mind for hearing and preaching. Truly this great heat and my own painful infirmity remind me of our Lord's words, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Nevertheless, may our Lord reveal himself to us according to the greatness of his compassion. Amen.

SEVEN
A PORTRAIT NO ARTIST CAN PAINT

SERMON GIVEN ON APRIL 26, 1885

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 1:16

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 43

*“He had in his right hand seven stars: and out of
his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword:
and his countenance was as the sun shineth
in his strength.”*

REVELATION 1:16.

WHILE reading this description given by John of what he saw in the isle called Patmos, I think you must have noticed that it would be quite impossible for any painter to depict it upon canvas, and equally impossible for any sculptor to embody it in stone or marble. Those who have attempted to copy the lines here given have signally failed; they may paint a picture of the garment down to the feet, and the golden girdle; but the rest, if

it be viewed from an artist's aspect, would be found to be incongruous: "His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire." No great painter would ever venture to give us a portrait of our Lord with his head and his hair "white like wool, as white as snow." If he did, it would be quite impossible to depict eyes that were "as a flame of fire." How would it be possible to make us realize, with the aid of any pen or pencil, that his feet were "like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace"? The task would have to be given over as quite hopeless when it reached this point: "He had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength."

I believe that this difficulty of giving a truthful representation of the Lord Jesus Christ is according to the divine purpose. Nothing, it seems to me, can be more detestable to the Lord's heart and mind than the worship of his image in any shape. If any are determined to break the law about making graven images, and bowing down before them, then let the idol be the image of something that is on the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth; but, O ye idolaters, pray do not, as it were, make the Lord Jesus Christ accessory to your idolatry. *That*, he never really can be, for lie abhors it. "Get thee behind me, Satan," would be his answer to every proposal that his image should be worshipped, for he could not endure it. It is a dreadful thing that men should ever dare attempt to make any likeness of the Son of God himself to be the occasion of sin. If ye must make an image, make it if ye will of a serpent, or of an ox, but not of the Son of God, who came on purpose to redeem us from this among other sins. Let us not degrade his sacred personage by making even it to be an image before which we prostrate ourselves.

I know it is said that idolaters do not worship the image,

and that they worship God through the image; but that is expressly forbidden. The first commandment is, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Then the second commandment forbids the worshipping of God by or through any symbol or image whatsoever: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them." The worship of the image of Christ appears to me to be not the more excusable form of idolatry, if there be any that is less evil than others, but it seems to me to be the more intensely wicked form of it, since it is making even the glorious personage of the Lord Jesus subsidiary to an act of transgression against the commandments of his Father. If we cannot say concerning the divine and human personage of our Lord, "Ye saw no similitude," yet we can say, "Ye saw no similitude such as can be engraven in any way whatever."

The fact is, that we have, in this apocalyptic vision, very extraordinary hieroglyphics put together. Hieroglyphic language does not aim at the artistic and the poetic; a hieroglyph has a higher object than the mere gratification of taste. It is intended to give us mental ideas, — not ideas for the eye, but ideas for the heart; not what we shall see, but that which we shall feel and understand. Hence, these figurative representations of different parts of our Lord's person, though they cannot be put together so as to form a picture, are, nevertheless, deeply instructive to every loving and reverent heart.

So I want you, dear friends, without wishing to make a complete portrait of your Lord, to try to follow the teaching in this verse. There are three things here; first, *the stars in Christ's hand*: "He had in his right hand seven stars." Then, secondly, there is *the sword in his mouth*: "Out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword." And then, thirdly, there is *the*

glory of his face: “His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.”

I. First, then, when John saw our Lord Jesus Christ, he naturally looked to his hand, and therefore he saw **THE STARS IN HIS HAND.**

Note, dear friends, that our Lord Jesus has a hand. He is not, as some fancy, an abstract idea of a personage without life. He has a hand, and that hand is a working hand. The hand that was pierced by the nail is not paralysed; it has strength to hold in itself seven stars. The hand that wrought out our redemption has not ceased to work for us. Christ holds in his hand that which he bought with the blood of his heart. John saw that his Lord held in his right hand seven stars. Let us always think of our Lord Jesus Christ as full of power, and actively using it; let us think of him at this moment as having a deft, and skilled, and mighty right hand, which he will lift up on the behalf of all those who put their trust in him. On the right hand of the Majesty on high there sits a right-handed Christ, still carrying on according to his own good pleasure the work of the Lord, which ever prospereth in his hand.

When John looked at Christ’s right hand, he tells us that in it he saw seven stars. These are generally understood to be the ministers of the seven churches of Asia; we are told, in the twentieth verse, that “the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches,” and I do not know who the angels of the churches can be unless they are the messengers of the churches, those ministers of whom Paul wrote, “they are the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ.” At any rate, we shall take it for granted that these stars represent the pastors of the churches, the ministers of Christ.

These stars are said to be in the Lord’s right hand, first, because *he made them stars*. They are in the hand of him who made them what they are. Under the old covenant, there were

to be, in the tabernacle, seven lights always burning upon the seven-branched candlestick, or lampstand; but John saw in Christ's hand seven stars; not ordinary lamps, but stars shining with a greater brilliance and a more heavenly light than could ever be seen in the oil-fed lamps in the ancient tabernacle. If any man in the Church of God shines like a star to guide others to the port of peace, he owes his light entirely to Christ. It must be so, because it is Christ's right hand that has made him what he is; he is a light because Christ has given him light, he owes his spiritual radiance entirely to him who is the Lord and Giver of light in the midst of his Church. My dear brethren in the ministry, if you want to shine for Jesus, you must be made into stars to be held in his right hand. There is no possibility of your being of spiritual use to your fellow-men, or exercising a ministry that shall tend to their eternal salvation, except as you are made into a light to be held in the right hand of the Lord Jesus Christ. All the education in the world, all the natural talent that any possess, all the acquired practice of oratory, all the powers which are the result of long experience, can never make a good minister of Jesus Christ. The stars are in the right hand of Christ; ministers are not made by men, but by the Lord himself, if they are worthy to be called ministers at all. So, the stars are in his right hand, first, because he made them.

They are there, next, dear friends, because *he holds them up*. Every Christian has to face great perils, and every Christian has need to pray to the Lord, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." But ministers of Christ, ministers whom he makes to be stars, are exposed to sevenfold peril. Against the leaders of the spiritual Israel the sharpest arrows of the enemy are sure to be shot; the word seems to be still passed round to our adversaries as in the ancient day of battle, when the king of Syria said to his captains, "Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king of Israel." If there be anywhere a captain who leads the

way, and comes to the very front of the host, the temptations that gather about him will be most fierce and terrible. Slander, misrepresentation, and every kind of evil shall dog his heels; and he above all men who are on the face of the earth must cry to his Lord, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." The mercy is, that the true minister of Christ is held up in Christ's right hand. He shall be kept faithful even unto death, he shall not fall; and, God helping him, he shall be caused to shine on right to the end of his ministry. Every now and then, we hear a rumour that some of God's own children have fallen from grace; I do not believe it. It is said that they have fallen away and perished; I do not believe it. Those of you who live till next November, and go out late at night, may see a great many shooting stars; and some of your little children will cry, "Look, father, the stars are falling;" and possibly some children will believe that stars have fallen from their places. Take the telescope, and look at the heavens; sweep the sky as far as the range of the instrument will permit. Jupiter is all right, and Saturn, and Mars, and Venus, and Mercury, and all the planets, they are all in their places; and the fixed stars are shining on as they have done ever since the Lord first kindled them to charm away the gloom of night. I do not know what these shooting stars may be, there have been many guesses with regard to them; neither do I know what these apostates may be, there have been a great many guesses about those that did flame out so brightly once. But I do know this, that Jesus still holds the seven stars in his right hand, and he will not drop even one of them; they shall not be reduced to six, or five, or four, or three, or two, or one, or vanish altogether; neither shall it ever be so with any of the true sons of God. Our Lord himself has said, "They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hands." If you, my

brother, are kept in the right hand of Christ, then you *are* kept. If you wish and hope to shine for Jesus through all the years that you shall live, then you must be held in his right hand, for he alone, who made you, can hold you up.

Next, are not the stars represented as being in Christ's right hand, because *he holds them out*, as well as holds them up? As a man holds a lamp in his hand, and holds it up and out as far as he can, that its light may shine the farther, so does Christ hold his servants up. Sometimes he holds some of them up high aloft above the multitude, so that, on the Sabbath, they rise quite out of themselves. They say what they could never have thought of saying by themselves; and they are enabled to plunge into mysteries which aforetime had not been opened up to them; and there are given unto them burning words that shine as well as burn, for their Lord lifts them up, and holds them out. Dear friends, pray much for us, who are called to preach the gospel, that we may always be lifted up in the right hand of Christ. If we try to shine simply with our own natural brightness, it will be a very poor, miserable exhibition of darkness; and if we try to work ourselves up, as some do, into a state of excitement, we may goad ourselves into a condition of semi-madness, and lead others into the same folly, but no good will come out of it. That elevation of spirit which comes from the right hand which once was pierced for us, that lifting up of holy speech which is given through contact with the right hand of him who spake as never man spake, that is the kind of uplifting that we want. Pray, beloved, that every star in the right hand of the Lord Jesus Christ may be held up and held out, and so shine yet farther and farther across the wild waste of the waters of sin and sorrow.

Do you not also think that, by the stars being in the right hand of Christ, is meant that *he claims them as his own*? Every faithful minister is Christ's property; he belongs to his Lord,

and he recognizes that blessed fact. "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price," is true of all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; but it is specially true of as many as are called out from among their fellows that they may be the mouth of God, and that God may speak by them to the feeding of his flock, and to the bringing home of his lost sheep. They are peculiarly and especially in the hand of Christ, for they belong entirely to Christ.

Is not this *the highest honour any man can have*, that he should be in Christ's right hand because he belongs to Christ? You see, it is specially mentioned that these stars are not in the left hand of Christ, but in his right hand, as if the Lord intended to put peculiar and special honour upon his servants who are faithful to him. Brethren, it does not become any of us who preach the gospel to seek honour of men. What is it, after all? What is the value of commendation from the lips of men? Suppose they should praise us, and flatter us, and say that wo are "thoughtful men," "abreast of the times," and I know not what, — all such stuff as this is but carrion, fit for the scavengers of the earth, but not worthy to be set before the angels of the churches. The true servants of Christ may well be satisfied to eat of the crumbs that fall from his table, rather than to feast upon the dainties that load the tables of the ungodly. If our hearts be wholly set on shining for Christ, and shining for nothing but Christ, and shining with nothing but Christ's own light, and the light of Christ's own truth, then are we as the stars in his right hand, beloved of him, and precious in his sight. Verily I say unto you, there shall be a glorious reward at the last for those who are made by Christ into stars, and who are held up, and held out in the right hand of their Lord, and so claimed by him as peculiarly and specially his own.

So much, then, concerning the ministers of Christ.

Brethren, pray for us; and pray for all the preachers of the Word, that they may be stars in the right hand of Christ.

II. But now, secondly, — and upon this I would dwell with great emphasis, — notice THE SWORD WHICH COMES OUT OF CHRIST'S MOUTH. "Out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword."

The conquering power of the gospel is in Christ himself; it does not lie with his ministers. The power with which Christ contends for the mastery against all the powers of darkness resides not with his servants, but dwells within himself. The two-edged sword of the Lord is in the mouth of the Lord. We shine, dear friends, — such little twinkling stars as any of us are, — we shine, and God blesses the shining: but if ever there is a soul saved, we have not saved it; and if ever there is an enemy of Christ who is wounded and slain, the deed is not done by our sword. By ourselves, we have no power; the really effectual work is done by Christ himself, and by him alone. The sword that goes out of our mouth is a poor blunt instrument, which can accomplish nothing; it is the sword that goes out of Christ's mouth that does everything in the great battle for the right. Notice how the right hand of Christ has to be used even to hold up these stars; ministers are not his right hand, they are only as stars that he holds up with his right hand. They derive all their power from him; but even when they are held up by his right hand, they are not the real warriors, it is not their strength with which the battle is fought and won; the power is in Christ himself, it is out of his mouth that there goeth the sharp two-edged sword that wins the victory.

Notice, dear friends, that the power of the Lord Jesus Christ to conquer men is *a power which is like a sword*. "The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God," comes out of the mouth of Christ himself; and coming out of his mouth, it does several things, which I will briefly mention to you,

First, it is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. This sword pierces “even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow.” When I am preaching most earnestly, some of you may find it possible to go to sleep; while I am talking to you even about the most sacred things, they may glide over you as oil might run down a slab of marble; but if my Lord speaks to you, you will be compelled to feel the power of this sword that goeth out of his mouth. Every Word that comes by his Spirit out of his mouth will seem to rip you open, and lay you bare, for, “all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do;” and he can make you feel that he is discerning the thoughts and intents of your hearts. The Lord Jesus Christ, when he comes into our midst, brings his fan in his hand, and with it he will thoroughly purge his floor; with every movement of that fan, and every breath of his Spirit, he is separating the chaff from the wheat. There is no escaping his observation when he is at work amongst us; private thoughts are detected, the secrets of the heart are laid bare, and the precious and the vile are severed the one from the other when he is working in the midst of his Church, for out of his mouth goeth the Word which is sharper than a two-edged sword.

When this sword comes out of the mouth of Christ, it wounds as well as discerns. As a sword cuts, pierces, pricks, and wounds, so does the Word of God. I do not wonder that people are sometimes angry with the Word of the Lord; who would not be angry when he is cut as with a sharp sword? I am not surprised that others retire to weep as if their hearts would break; who would not weep when the knife cuts into his flesh and touches his very marrow? When the Lord Jesus Christ blesses the Word by his Spirit, the wounded are all round him. The ungodly begin to tremble, and the godly ones, finding that Christ is fighting against the sin that is within them, are

wounded and bleeding in a hundred places because of that two-edged sword of his which cuts through coats of mail, and wounds even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit.

Out of Christ's mouth comes, not only a wounding but a killing sword. When he speaks with power, — and, oh! how I wish that he would do so just now! — sinners feel that their self-righteousness is killed, and that all their carnal hopes are killed. They can say — and I trust that some of you can say, with John, — “‘When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead.’ I was alive till I saw Christ, I seemed to be all that I wanted to be till I saw Christ; but when I saw him on the cross, when I read the mystery of his passion, and understood what it cost him to redeem a soul from death, then I saw what a sinner I must be, and I also saw what would be the result of my sin if I had to bear the penalty of it, and then, ‘I fell at his feet as dead.’”

Brethren and sisters, let us pray the Lord Jesus Christ to use that sword which is in his mouth, constantly to use it among us; for what is the use of the seven stars in his right hand, what is the use of anything, unless Christ's own voice is heard, and Christ's own truth is driven home to the hearts of men? We have a good deal of preaching, nowadays, do we not? But one Word out of Christ's mouth would be worth fifty thousand out of the mouths of the greatest preachers who have ever lived. Oh! if HE will but speak, the preacher may be very illiterate, and he may not have much to say, but if God speaks through him, there will be a power about his message which cannot be resisted. On the other hand, the preacher may be one who has been well trained and taught, and he may speak eloquently, so as to please his hearers, but if God does not speak through him, what mere froth it is! It is gone like a vapour, and no result comes of it all. Do let us keep on crying that the Master himself may be at work in our midst, with the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, proceeding out of his mouth.

Did you notice that the text said that *out of Christ's mouth there went a sharp sword*? There is nothing so sharp as God's Word. When we are speaking, it is very seldom that God blesses merely our words; it is usually what we quote from the Scripture that is the means of the salvation of our hearers. I think it was McCheyne who said, "It is not our word, but God's Word, which saves souls." I notice that, in most conversions, the point of decision has been reached when a text has been quoted. The word which God has blessed has been mainly Scriptural; even if the truth has not been spoken in the exact words of inspiration, yet it has been most clearly and manifestly a quotation from the Scripture put into other words. There is nothing so sharp as the Word of God. People will get round what we say, but they cannot get round what God says. They can ignore your opinion, and my view of the case, and another person's dictum upon it; but they cannot forget that which comes to them with this message, "Thus saith the Lord It is written;" and when the Spirit of God applies the truth to their hearts, it is indeed a sharp sword.

It is also *two-edged*, for the text calls it "a sharp two-edged sword." There is no handling this weapon without cutting yourself, for it has no back to it, it is all edge. The Word of Christ, somehow or other, is all edge. I remember preaching a sermon upon the resurrection, on purpose to see whether God would bless it to the conversion of sinners; there were many brought to Christ by that discourse. With the same intention, I have preached divine sovereignty, and the election of grace, and I have seen many won to Christ by those stern truths. I have often noticed that, when I have been preaching for the comfort of God's people, there have always been sinners wounded even then, for the Word is all edge; and even the consolations of the gospel, while they cheer the believer, will cut the sinner in twain. There is something even about that which is the

sweetest truth to the believer which is sour to the unbeliever, and cuts into his conscience. Only let us preach the gospel, and we shall never find any other weapon like it. As David said of Goliath's sword, so may we say of the sword of the Spirit, "There is none like that, give it me." When I am invited to preach the novel doctrines of the present age, or to try the modern methods of fighting the devil, I look these new weapons up and down, and I advise those who offer them to me to send them to the Exhibition of Inventions up in the West of London. You may see them there, but you will never see them here. The old sword suits my hand, and God blesses it to the cutting and the wounding and the killing of sinners; God the Holy Spirit, who made it, uses it most effectually; so, by the grace of God, we will keep to it, and use no other; as long as we live.

I beg all of you, who try to bring sinners to Christ, to stick to that old sword, the two-edged sword that goeth out of Christ's mouth. If souls are not saved by the preaching of the truth, they will not be saved by the telling of lies. I have sometimes heard really awful doctrine preached at revival services, and an easy-going brother has said, "Well, you see, it was an evangelistic meeting." Yes, but you should not tell lies at evangelistic meetings. "Oh, but then, if we were to preach the same truth to these sinners that you would proclaim to a company of believers, it would not do them any good!" Well, then, nothing else will, depend upon it. If the truth will not have any effect upon them, your toning of that truth down, or your screwing it up will not improve it, but will spoil it. I believe that the very gospel that comforts saints is the gospel that saves sinners, that there is but one gospel for all purposes and all people, and that, therefore, two gospels will never be required. You have only to strike this way with one edge of the sword, and then that way with the other edge of it, or to swing it to and fro, like that ancient warrior did with his great two-handed sword, and you

will strike sinners down right and left, smiting the self-righteous this way, and the licentious the other way. Only keep you to that grand old sword which the apostles used, which was in the martyrs' hands, and by which Christ himself triumphed, is triumphing, and will triumph even to the end.

III. The third part of my subject will have but few words from me, and perhaps the fewer I shall say, the better it will be. The point to which it refers is, **THE GLORY OF CHRIST'S FACE**: "His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." I will not attempt to explain these words, but will only call your attention to one or two thoughts concerning them.

First, what do you see in Christ's right hand? Seven stars; yet how insignificant they appear when you get a sight of *his face*! They are stars, and there are seven of them; but who can see seven stars, or, for the matter of that, seventy thousand stars, when the sun shineth in his strength? How sweet it is, when the Lord himself is so present in a congregation that the preacher, whoever he may be, is altogether forgotten! I pray you, dear friends, when you go to a place of worship, always try to see the Lord's face rather than the stars in his hand; look at the sun, and you will forget the stars. If you look for the stars, it may be that you will see neither star nor sun, for the Lord may withdraw his light from his servants because you are looking to them rather than looking to him. In Christ's hand are the stars, but his countenance is "as the sun shineth in his strength."

What does this mean but that there is about our Divine Lord *an inexpressible, indescribable, infinite splendour*? No man can look at the sun, — it would blind him, — the sun when it shineth in its strength; not when it is rising in the morning, nor yet when it is setting in the evening, nor yet when a cloud passes over it; but the sun in its strength, no man can look at that, he would soon lose his eyes if he did. So, who shall ever

know, much less tell, the glories of the Lord Jesus Christ? To know him, is our great ambition; but his love surpassed knowledge. That is our confession after years of endeavouring to search into the height and depth and length and breadth of his love. Think of your Lord, then, as covered with inconceivable glory.

But this expression is to be regarded also as setting forth Christ's *overpowering pre-eminence*. The best of his servants are only stars, but he is the Sun. In Christ there is more light than there is in all the prophets, saints, and apostles who have ever lived. All their light came from him, but all their light was still remaining in him; and all the light that ever shall be, throughout all the ages, will be as nothing compared with the light that there is in him. One said of Harry the Eighth that, if all the tyrants who ever lived had been dead, they might all have been considered as reproduced in that one man. I may say of our Lord Jesus Christ something very different, that is, if all the good things and all the virtuous things and all the loving things that have ever been since the world began were gone, they are all to be found in him. As the sun is the great source of light and heat, so there is an overpowering pre-eminence about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Yet, further, this is *a communicable excellence*. The sun, when he shineth in his strength, is pouring out his light; the sun has not light merely for himself, but his light is for all the worlds that are round about him, as the face, the glory, the excellence, the merit of Christ, is for all his people. He is for ever pouring it forth, and this is his splendour, that he shines upon the sons of men to fill them with joy.

Yet this figure of the sun has in it something *justly terrible*. Who could fight against the sun that shineth in his strength? If all the powers that be contended against the sun, and attempted to invade his territory, the sun would consume them

all And who shall fight against thee, O Sun of righteousness? Thou shalt utterly consume them in the day of thy wrath. There will be something terrible about the face of Christ when he comes to judgment; then shall men cry, "Hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne." But to his people there is something in his face that is *intensely joyful*. We shall never be in the dark, for our Lord's face is like the sun. Put out all the lamps, and let all temporal comfort and all spiritual comfort vanish, yet spare us Christ, give us but to see his face, and to be favoured with his smile, and we shall need no candle, neither light of any other sun, for the face of Christ "is as the sun that shineth in his strength."

Dear friends, are you on the Lord's side? Are you on Jesus Christ's side? If so, be happy that you have such a Saviour. Are you an opponent of his? Then tremble, and bow before him. "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." May he send this choice blessing to you all, for his dear name's sake! Amen.

EIGHT
FEAR NOT

SERMON GIVEN ON MARCH 9, 1880

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 1:17

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 26

“Fear not.”

REVELATION

1:17

“FEAR not” is a plant which grows very plentifully in God’s garden. If you look through the lily beds of Scripture you will continually find by the side of other flowers the sweet “Fear nots” peering out from among doctrines and precepts, even as violets look up from their hiding places of green leaves. “Fear nots” bloomed in the old time, at the feet of Abraham, when he returned from fighting with the kings. Melchisedek blessed him, and the Lord comforted him. The patriarch might have been half afraid that he would always lead a troubled life, now

that he had once drawn the sword; but the Lord came to him in vision, and said, "Fear not, Abram. I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." If he had to undergo a soldier's toils, he should have a soldier's shield and a soldier's pay, and both should be exceeding great, for he should find them both in God. After you have been fighting battles for Christ you may feel weary and worried, and then your great Melchisedek will refresh you with bread and wine, and whisper in your ear "Fear not."

A "Fear not" was spoken to Isaac when he had dug wells, and the Philistines strove for them, and he, like the meek soul that he was, gave them up one by one to avoid a conflict. At last he settled down at Beersheba, and there the Lord appeared unto him, and said, "Fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee." He was a feeble man, and therefore the Lord dealt tenderly with him. If any of you are meek and quiet spirits, and rather apt to tremble exceedingly, may the Lord often give you a blessed "Fear not" to wear in your bosoms, that its fragrance may comfort your hearts. Then there was Jacob. You know how troubled his life was, but when he heard that his beloved son whom he thought was dead was alive in Egypt, and was clothed with glory, and that he had sent for him to go down to see him, he was afraid to go till the Lord said to him, "Fear not to go down into Egypt," and gave him this encouraging promise, "I will go down with thee into Egypt." If any of you are making a great change in life and moving, perhaps, to the very ends of the earth, "fear not to go down into Egypt." Should God command you to go to the utmost verge of the green earth, to rivers unknown to song, yet if he bids you go, fear not to go down into Egypt, for certainly he will be with you.

The Israelites at the Red Sea were afraid of Pharaoh, and then the Lord said to them, "Fear not, stand still and see the salvation of God." If you are brought to a pass to-night, and

know not what to do, take the advice of Holy Scripture, and “Fear not”; but “stand still and see the salvation of God.” As we observe the Scriptures we perceive that “Fear nots” are scattered throughout the Bible as the stars are sprinkled over the whole of the sky, but when we come to Isaiah we find constellations of them. When I was a boy I learnt Dr. Watts’s catechism, and I am glad I did. One of its questions runs thus, “Who was Isaiah?” And the answer is, “He was that prophet who spake more of Jesus Christ than all the rest.” Very well, and for that very reason— that he spoke more of Jesus Christ than all the rest— he is richest in comfort to the people of God, and continually he is saying, “Fear not.” Here are a few of his antidotes for the fever of fear: “Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not.” “Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God.” “Fear not, I will help thee.” “Fear not, thou worm Jacob.” “Fear not, I have redeemed thee.” “Fear not, for thou shalt not be ashamed; neither be thou confounded, for thou shalt not be put to shame”; and so on, I was going to say, “world without end.” So abundant are these “Fear nots” that they grow like the king-cups and the daisies, and other sweet flowers of the meadows, among which the little children in the spring-time delight themselves. As to gathering them all, no one would attempt the task. The bank that is fullest of these beautiful flowers is that which Isaiah has cast up; go there and pluck them for yourselves.

Now I gather from the plentifulness of “Fear nots,” even in the Old Testament, that the Lord does not wish his people to be afraid, that he is glad to see his people full of courage, and especially that he does not love them to be afraid of him. He would have his children treat him with confidence. Slavish fear may be thought to be congenial to the Old Testament, and yet it is not so, for there the Lord cries to his chosen, “Fear not.”

When we come into the New Testament, there we see God

coming more familiarly to men than ever before; not descending upon Paran with ten thousand flaming chariots, setting the mountain on a blaze, but coming down to Bethlehem in an infant's form, with angels chanting the joyful lay, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men." The genius of the New Testament is drawing near to God: ceasing to tremble and beginning to trust, ceasing to be the slave and learning to be the child. Though in the precise form of it the words of my text were not very often spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ, yet his whole life was one long proclamation of "Fear not." I think I shall give you to-night most of the instances in which our Lord himself expressly said "Fear not," and as each one I shall give you will either come from the lip of Christ, or else from Christ's own angel, sent to comfort one of his servants, I pray that it may come fresh from God to every tried and troubled believer, and that all of us together may receive for our different fears this one same solace from the mouth of the Eternal, "Thus saith the Lord unto thee, fear not."

I. Our first text you will kindly look for if you have your Bibles with you. I hope you all have them, for I love to hear the rustling of Bible leaves as we do in Scotland, but not often in England. Turn to the Book of the Revelation, the first chapter, and the seventeenth verse, and there you will read that John beheld the Saviour in his glorious array, and he says,

"When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last."

Our first "Fear not" MEETS THE DREAD OCCASIONED BY THE MAJESTY OF OUR SAVIOUR'S PERSON. You that know him hold him in deepest reverence, even as John did when at the sight of his divine Lord he fell at his feet as dead. Did you ever think of Jesus as divine, and try to

form some idea of his grandeur, his triumph, and his exaltation above the thrones and principalities of heaven? As your soul has extolled him, and your mind has been expanded with high thoughts of the all-glorious Son of God, has it not occurred to you to say within yourself, "How dare I think that he is my Beloved, and that I am his? Could such majesty meet such misery? Could such glory bring itself into union with such insignificance as mine?" I know you must have experienced that feeling; and yet you must not yield to it, for our Lord Jesus, although he loves to see your holy awe, would not have that reverence freeze into a chill reserve or a slavish trembling. No, though he be divine, he invites you to approach him without dread. Great as he is, you may dare to be free with him.

*"Let us be simple with him then, —
Not backward, stiff, or cold,
As though our Bethlehem could be
What Sinai was of old."*

Let your Lord be glorious to you, but still let him be near you. Exalt him on his throne, but remember that you sit there with him. However glorious he may be, he has desired that you may behold his glory, and be with him where he is. To you hath he given to overcome, and to sit upon his throne even as he has overcome, and has sat down with the Father upon his throne.

If you have studied the matchless purity of his character with adoring admiration, you must have been amazed at the absolute perfection of his manhood, and the glory of his moral and spiritual character. At such times, if you have had a true sense of your own position, you have been ready to sink into the dust, and you have exclaimed, "Shall he wash my feet? Shall he give himself for me? Can it be that he could have loved one so stained and polluted, so mean and so beggarly, so altogether

unworthy even to live, much less to be loved by such an altogether lovely one?" But I pray you always to remember, when you think of his perfection, that he has perfection of mercy as well as of holiness, and perfection of love to sinners as well as perfection of hatred of sin; and that, guilty as you are, you must never doubt his affection, for he has pledged you in his heart's blood, and proved his love by his death. Albeit that you are conscious of being less than nothing and vanity, and know that Jesus is absolute perfection, yet regard him not with timorous dread, but draw near to him as confidently as a child to its parent, or a wife to her husband. It is one of Satan's temptations to make us afraid of Christ. Let us not be ignorant of his devices. Why should you be afraid of Jesus when he tells you not to be? Why dread the Lamb of God? He says, "Fear not." It is not the preacher who cries "Fear not," but it is Jesus himself who whispers to his poor servant, fallen as dead at his feet, "Fear not: fear not." It will be disobedience, then, to be afraid. When those lips, which are as lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh, say to me, "Child of mine, fear not," how can I be afraid? Your safety lies, remember, dear friend, in trusting Jesus, and not in being afraid of him. There was never a soul yet saved by being afraid of Christ: there was never a prodigal that found forgiveness yet by being afraid of his Father. This kind of fear wants casting out, for it hath torment. Jesus, our Lord, is great and good, but then he has chosen to become the Saviour of sinners, and we need not fear to approach him, for "this man receiveth sinners." A host that entertains at his table the poorest of the poor and the lowest of the low, and bids them welcome, is not one to be feared. Remember that if you are honestly afraid of Jesus, you should be afraid of grieving him by being afraid of him. When the physician sees the patient shrinking from his knife he does not wonder, but when Jesus sees you shrinking from that hand which does not wound, but

cures by its own wound, he looks with eyes of sorrow upon such fear. Why shrink from him? The little children ran into his arms. Why shrink from him? Nothing cuts him to the quick more than the unkind, ungenerous thought that he is unwilling to receive the guilty. If he meant to keep you at a distance he would have stopped in heaven; his coming here cannot mean anything else than love to the perishing: therefore do not grieve him by being afraid of him. Remember that his truthfulness forbids the rejection of any that ever come to him, since he has pledged his word that he will in no wise cast them out. You need not therefore be afraid that you especially may not come. I had a letter but this week, in which one poor soul says, "I believe that I am the worst person that ever lived: though not in outward appearance, yet in heart. I believe that all other sorts of people feel more than I do, or have some one point in which they are better than I am, but I am the worst of all, and I fear that Jesus will never look on me." Downcast soul, there is no true ground for such a suspicion. If you had a devil in you, you might still come to Christ; and if there were a legion of devils in you— and I do not quite know how many made up a legion; but if there were so many that you could not count them— yet you might come with all the devils in hell in you and he still would not frown upon you, but he would cast the devils out of you. Oh, be not afraid to come to him whose wounds invite you. The blessed Saviour who receiveth sinners loves not that you should stay away through fear.

I know what some of you are doing: you are trying to get to heaven by a roundabout road. The late Emperor of Russia, when the railway was to be made between Moscow and St. Petersburg, employed a great number of engineers in making plans. He looked over many of their maps, and at last, like the practical man that he was, he said, "Here, bring me a ruler." They brought him a ruler: he took a pencil, and drawing a

straight line he said, "That is the way to engineer it: we want no other plan than one straight line." There are a great many ways of engineering souls to heaven; but the only one that is worth considering is this:— Draw a straight line to Christ at once. Did I hear one awakened soul say, "I should like to talk to Mr. Cuff"? By all means talk to him, but do not stop at that, nor stop for that. Go to Christ first. "Oh, but I should like to talk with a good woman— a dear Christian lady." I recommend you to go to Jesus Christ at once, and see the lady afterwards. It is all very well to have an enquiry room, and I have not a word to say against it, but the best enquiry room in the world is your own bedroom. Go and enquire of Christ straight away. We may make our Christian workers and leaders into little priests if we do not mind what we are at. There must be nobody between a soul and Christ. Blind souls will never get their eyes opened by all the kind hands of all the good people in Shoreditch, or in all London. Christ's hands can give sight, and only his; and you may get to Christ to-night. "Which way?" say you. By no movement of your body, but by a motion of your mind. Turn your thoughts towards him, your desires towards him, your trust towards him. Look to him and live. May the Holy Ghost lead you to trust him now, and he will save you.

Thus have I tried very briefly to set forth the fear which arises from the majesty of the divine person of Christ, for which he prescribes this cure: "Fear not, I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore." Do not be afraid of Jesus because of his glory, nor stand back because of your unfitness. You do want a Mediator between your soul and God; but you do not want a mediator between your souls and Christ. You may come to him straight away just as you are.

*"Come needy, and guilty, come loathsome and
hate;
You can't come too filthy, come just as you are."*

Draw a straight line,— remember that, a straight line from your lost condition to Christ, and let your resolve be: I, being lost, trust Jesus to save me, and I am saved.

II. The second "Fear not" is equally precious. Turn to Luke, the eighth chapter and the fiftieth, verse, the chapter we were reading just now, and there you will find that Jairus had a little daughter, who was dead, and they said—

"Trouble not the Master. But when Jesus heard it, he answered him, saying, Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole."

THIS MEETS THE FEAR ARISING OUT OF THE DESPERATENESS OF THE CASE IN HAND. The little girl was actually dead; and yet Jesus said, "Fear not." Here is comfort as to others. Dear friend, if you have been praying for a long time about anyone who is near and dear to you, and you have been longing for that person's salvation, and your prayer has not been answered, and that person has even gone from bad to worse, I want you not to give up praying. "Oh, but," you say, "I am getting very downcast, for they are plunging into deeper sin." Well, there is cause for fear, but not while Jesus lives, for he can reach a soul so long as it remains this side the gates of death. Jesus can still save a man while he is yet out of hell. Continue to pray, and fear not. No case is absolutely hopeless while Jesus lives. Love will still prevail. We meet sometimes with amazing instances where prayer is heard at last. I have read of a woman who prayed long for her husband. She used to attend a certain meeting-house in the north of England, but her husband never went with her. He was a drinking, swearing man, and she had much anguish of heart about him. She never

ceased to pray, and yet she never saw any result. She went to the meeting house quite alone, with this exception, that a dog always went with her, and this faithful animal would curl himself up under the seat, and lie quiet during the service. When she was dead, her husband was still unsaved, but doggie went to the meeting-house. His master wondered whatever the faithful animal did at the service. Curiosity made him follow the good creature. The dog led him down the aisle to his dear old mistress's seat. The man sat on that seat, and the dog curled himself up as usual. God guided the minister that day; the word came with power, and that man wept till he found the Saviour. Never give up your husbands, good women, for the Lord may even use a dog to bring them to Christ when you are dead and gone. Never give up praying, hoping, and expecting. Fear not; believe only, and you shall have your heart's desire. Pray for them as long as there is breath in your body and theirs. It is of no use praying for them when they are dead, but as long as they are here never cease to plead with God on their account. Persons have been converted to God under very extraordinary circumstances. Two base fellows thought to rob the house of a godly man, the vicar of the parish, who was accustomed on Sunday evening to gather his poor people together in his parlour and preach the gospel to them. This was a little extra work after the day's services. The thieves thought that if they could get into the house with the people during the evening, and hide themselves away, they could rob the house easily during the night; and so they got into the next room to that in which the Word was preached. But they never robbed that house, for through the godly vicar's address the Lord Jesus Christ stole away their hearts, and they came forth to confess their sin, and to become followers of the Saviour. You do not know how far the arrows of the conquering Saviour may fly. Never despair. Jesus Christ comforts you in reference to the

souls of those for whom you are anxious, by saying "Fear not; believe only, and they shall be made whole." Labour for them, pray for them, and believe that Jesus Christ can save them.

Let the same truth be fully believed as to yourselves. O my dear hearer, you may think you are too far gone for salvation, but you are not. You may imagine that your case is altogether a lot out of the catalogue; but you are just the sort of person that Jesus Christ saves. If he never saved odd people he would never have saved me, for many men judge me to be a singular being. If you are another oddity, come along with me, and let us trust in him. If you are the one man that is a little over the line of mercy, you are the very man that Jesus Christ chooses to bless, for he loves to save extraordinary sinners. He is a very extraordinary Saviour; there never was another like him, and when he meets a sinner that is extraordinary, and never another like him, he often takes him, and makes him one of his captains, as he did Saul of Tarsus, who became Paul the apostle. I do pray you "fear not" on account of the greatness of your sin. Be humbled on account of it, but do not despair about it. Are you old in iniquity? Are you deeply ingrained in transgression by long practice in it? Still doubt not the Redeemer's power. If your salvation rested on yourself you might despair, but the Lord has laid help on one that is mighty, even on his only-begotten Son, and he is able to save to the uttermost them that come to God by him. O poor condemned sinner, look up and hope. O thou who hast heard the clang of the iron gate, thou who art shut up in despair, have hope, have brave hope, for Jesus saith to thee, "Fear not, believe only, and thou shalt be made whole." God grant that this gracious "Fear not" may be a comfort to some seeker here.

III. Our third "Fear not" is taken from Luke fifth, and the seventh verse, and perhaps what I am about to say will suit Mr. Cuff and other successful ministers:

“They came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.”

THIS MEETS THE FEAR WHICH ARISES OUT OF THE GREATNESS OF HIS GOODNESS. If the Lord has made any one of you successful in his service, if you are made of the same stuff as I am, your success lays you low before his throne. Time was when everybody was abusing me, and then I rejoiced and gloried in God: I had happy days when my name was cast out as evil. But when the Lord in his great mercy gave me souls for my hire, and began to build up the church at the Tabernacle, I became subject thereupon to such sinking of spirits that I can scarcely tell you how crushed I have been under the weight of divine mercy. I should not wonder if my dear brother Cuff has gone home, after seeing a crowd at the Town Hall, and after seeing this great house full, and has said, “Lord, why hast thou been pleased to use me and to favour me?” If any of you are blessed in your work, as I trust you may be, you may also be made to feel the mysterious depression which takes the place of self-exaltation in those who know that every good gift comes from God alone.

Fear because of the Lord’s great goodness also comes in another shape: a person says, “I believe that I am saved for I have looked to Christ, and I am lightened. And yet can it be?” The thought suggests itself, “It is too good to be true.” Now, look you, sirs, if it were not supremely good it would not be true. It is because it is so excessively good that it is true. As one said of God’s mercy when his friend was astonished at it, “I am

astonished too; but still it is just like him." It is just the way of God, you know, to bless a poor sinner beyond all that he can ask or think. It is the way with God to astonish us with his grace. When the Lord sends his mercy it never rains, but it pours. He deluges the desert. He not only gives enough to moisten, but enough to drench the furrows. He makes the wilderness a standing pool of water, and the thirsty land springs of water. Do not, therefore, doubt the genuineness of his mercy because of its greatness.

But some timorous professors say, "This is a great work which God is doing here, but it is too great to last." Yes, that too I have heard, and the gathering of many to hear the gospel has been sneered at as "a nine days' wonder." Alas! our unbelief has said, "It cannot last"; and yet it has lasted. The path of faith to my mind is very like that of a man walking on a tight-rope high up in the air, and you always seem half afraid that he will fall; yet if the Lord placed us on a spider's web as high as the Alps he would not let us slip. The walk of faith is like going up an invisible staircase. When you have climbed and climbed, you sometimes cannot see one single step before you. Each step seems to be upon the air, and yet when you put your foot down it is solid granite firmer than the earth itself. There are times when Satan whispers, "God will leave you. God will forsake you. He has done all this for you, and yet he will leave you." Ah, but he never will, for his faithfulness never fails. We must not be like the countryman who, when he had to cross the river, said that he would wait till the stream was dry, for it could not run so fast as that long, but must all run away. We have feared that we should live till the river of God's mercy had run dry; but it never has, and it never will. Some professors say when a great number of sinners are converted, "Oh, well, you see there are so many, they cannot be all genuine." That is why I think the work to be real. When I see a little peddling work of one

every now and then, I am far more inclined to say, "Well, I do not know. It may be of God, but it is not a very great affair, and he generally does great things when his Spirit is poured out." But when I see him calling three thousand in one day, I say, "This is the finger of God. I am sure of it." I would be the last to despise the day of small things, but I must also speak up for the day of great things. I have noticed that those who are added to the church at times of revival are people that hold on quite as well as others, and I think better than others. That is my experience; because at other times we are apt to say, "there are so few coming forward; we must not be quite so strict in examining them;" but when there is a great number we feel that we can afford to be particular, and we are naturally more strict. I do not justify this, but I am sure that the tendency exists. I believe in a great work; and when I see our Lord filling the net, I think I hear him saying to me, "Do not be afraid because the fish make the boat sink down to the water's edge. Fear not. You shall get many more than these. Let down your net again."

Let us not doubt because it seems too wonderful that God should bless us to a great extent. It is wonderful, but let us have no doubt about it. Can the Lord use such poor worms as we are? He does use us. Do not ask how he can do it if he does do it. He is a God of sovereignty, and he uses whom he wills, and if he blesses you, give him the glory of it: but do not let the greatness of his grace cause you to mistrust. You have seen a painter with his palette on his finger, and he has ugly little daubs of paint upon the palette. What can he do with those spots? Go in and see his picture. What splendid painting! What lights! What shades! Where are those daubs of paint? They have been used up upon the picture. What! Did he make that picture out of those ugly spots of paint? Yes, that picture was made out of those little daubs of colour! That is the way with painters. In even a wiser way does Jesus act towards us. He takes us, poor

smudges of paint, and he makes the blessed pictures of his grace out of us; for it is neither the brush he uses, nor the paint he uses, but it is the skill of his own hand which does it all, and unto his name be the praise. Now, poor worker, do not be afraid. The great Artist will take you in hand, and make something of you. I forget how much can be made out of a pennyworth of iron, but I do know that there are methods by which a pennyworth of iron can be so moulded, and wrought, and fashioned, that it can become worth a hundred times what it was before it came under the manufacturer's hand. What the Lord can make of such poor creatures as we are, who shall tell? He says, "Fear not and I pray you do not fear. You who make up the church in Shoreditch, do not be afraid because the Lord fills this great house. Beckon to your partners that are in the other ships to come and help you. Help those round about to fill their boats, and may God send you a long and continued revival of religion in this whole region. Let not the old folks get frightened at the Lord's glorious working: believe in it and rejoice! Why, if the Lord were to convert three thousand in one day in any place, there are numbers who would say, "I do not believe in it, for I never saw anything like it." Many churches would say, "We do not think that we ought to take them in just yet." At Pentecost they baptized the converts the same day. You see, the church was ready to baptize them: we have no church in England that would do that: I fear not one, and we have no Christian people who would approve of it if it were done, but they would as a rule murmur that it was rash enthusiasm, and an ill-advised haste. "I believe in the Holy Ghost" We say that, but do we practically believe it? God grant we may.

IV. But now I turn to a fourth *u* Fear not," which we find in the tenth of Matthew, the twenty-eighth verse. I will not turn to it, but I will just tell you of it because there are many of you here who need its comfort. "Fear not them which kill the body,

but are not able to kill the soul: hut rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

THIS IS MEANT TO REMOVE THE FEAR ARISING OUT OF SHARP PERSECUTION. In a region like this, when a working man is converted to Jesus Christ, his friends and his neighbours soon find it out, and I am sorry to say that working-men, as a rule, do not treat Christian men fairly. They used to say in America, "It is a free country; every man may whip his own [negro]," and so it is here: it is a free country, every man may swear at his fellow-workman for worshipping God. It is a fearful piece of meanness that men should molest their fellows for being godly. If you have a right to swear, I have a right to sing psalms; and if you have a right to break the Sabbath, I have a right to keep it, and I have a right to go in and out of the workshop without being called ill-names because I live in the fear of God. But the right is not always recognized. Some have to run the gauntlet from morning to night because they serve the Lord. Now, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, do not be afraid, though you are nothing but poor sheep, and you are sent out into the midst of wolves. Does it not seem as if our Lord could hardly have known what he was at when he said, "Behold, I send you forth as sheep among wolves." Yet he made no mistake. Just think for a minute:— how many wolves are there in the world now? They have been eating up the sheep ever since they had a chance; but are there more wolves or more sheep alive at this day? Why, the wolves get fewer and fewer every day, till when a wolf comes down into the inhabited lands in France we have it reported in the paper, and we have not one animal of the kind in this country wild, though they used to abound here. The fact is, the sheep have driven out the wolves. It looked as if they would eat the sheep up, but the sheep have exterminated them. So it will be in the end with defenceless believers and raging persecutors; patient

weakness will overcome passionate strength. Only be patient. You have an anvil in the shop: and you know how hard the hammer comes down on it. What does the anvil do? Why, bears it. You never saw the anvil get up and fight the hammer. Never. It stands still and takes the blows. Down comes the hammer. But now listen. How many hammers have been worn out to one anvil? Where it has stood for years, the old block of iron remains, ready to bear more strokes. The hammers will break, but not the anvil. Be you an anvil, brother. Be you the sheep, brother, still; for heavenly submission shall win the victory, and patient non-resistance shall come off more than a conqueror.

Do not fear, I pray you, so as to conceal your testimony. Tell out for Jesus Christ what he has done for you, and the more they blaspheme and persecute you, be you the more determined by God's grace that they shall not be able to find fault in your character, and that they shall know that you are a Christian man. Climb up the mast and nail the colours to it. Drive another nail to-night. Fix the colours to the mast-head. Say, "No, never by God's grace will I be ashamed of being a Christian. I might be ashamed if I were a drunkard. I might be ashamed if I were a swearer; but I never will be ashamed that I am a follower of the crucified Son of God."

O poor men and women, who have for the most part to bear the brunt of the world's assaults, God grant that you may not fear. Do not fall into doubt about your religion either. Do not be so afraid as to fall into questioning and unbelief. True religion never was in the majority, and never will be for many a year to come. You may rest assured that if we were to poll the world for any opinion, and if that opinion should be decided by a majority, it would be necessarily wrong. Now and then in one country the right prevails, but all the world over the seed of the serpent outnumber the seed of the woman. Blessed is he who

can stand in a minority of one with God; for a minority of one for God is in the judgment of truth a majority. Count God with you, and you have more with you than all they that be against you.

V. I must not keep you much longer, for the heat grows great, and I fear some of you are fainting. Therefore I want to say another word which I should like you all to hear. This is the fifth "Fear not." You will find it in Luke 12. verse 32. Christ preaching to his disciples said,—

"Fear not, little flock: for it is your Father's good
pleasure to give you the kingdom."

THIS IS MEANT TO PREVENT FEAR AS TO TEMPORAL THINGS. NOW, I know that this is a time in which many of God's people are much tried, and they tremble lest they should not be provided for. Harken to this,— Did you escape from poverty by being frightened about it? Did your fears ever make you any the richer? Have you not found it to be vain to rise up early and to sit up late, and to eat the bread of carefulness when you have had no faith in God? Have you not learned that? And do you not know that if you are a child of God he will certainly give you your food and raiment? Ah, I hear a heavy sigh from one,— "It has been a hard winter." It is true, my friend, it has been a hard winter. I dare say that the birds have found it so, and yet on Sunday morning I noticed when I opened my window early that they were singing very sweetly; and this morning, too, they broke forth in a chorus of harmonious song. You know what the little bird sings when he sits on a bare bough with the snow all around him? He chirps out—

"Mortal, cease from toil and sorrow,

God provideth for the morrow."

Learn the sparrow's song, and try, if you can, to catch the spirit of the bird which has no barn or storehouse, and yet is fed. There is this to comfort you: "Your heavenly Father knoweth what things ye have need of." He understands your wants. Is it not enough for a child that his father knows his needs? Rest in that, and be confident that verily you shall be fed. You will not have much in this world, perhaps; but you shall have the kingdom. Be of good cheer about that. Your inheritance is yet to come; you shall have the kingdom. You have even now a reversionary interest in eternal glory, and this involves present supplies: he who promises the end will provide for the way. Some of the Lord's best people are those that have to suffer most, but it is because they can here glorify him most by suffering. I think the angels in heaven must almost envy a child of God who has the power and the privilege to suffer for Christ's sake; for doubtless angels render perfect service to the heavenly King, yet not by suffering. Theirs is active and not passive obedience to the will of God. Methinks they will cluster round some of you in heaven, and say, "You lived down at Bethnal Green, or Shoreditch. Ah, yes." The angels will say, "What sort of a place did you live in? One dark room? You were very poor: you were out of work: and did you trust God?" The angels will be pleased as you tell them, "Oh yes, we went to the heavenly Father still, and we said, 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.'" That is the grandest thing that a man ever did say; at least, I think it is. Mr. Cuff says some fine things, but he never uttered a nobler sentence than that,— "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." The expression is sublime! When Job had lost everything, after being immensely rich, he sat on a dunghill, and scraped his sores, and he said, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I

return thither." He was reduced to the most abject want, and yet he added— "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Ye cherubim and seraphim, in all your songs no stanza excels that heroic verse. Angels cannot rise to such a height of sublime devotion to the Invisible One as Job did when in his misery he glorified his God by abiding confidence. Oh, you that are brought very low, you have grand opportunities for honouring God if you will but trust him. "Fear not." "Fear not."

*"Fear not the loss of outward good,
He will for his provide,
Give them supplies of daily food,
And all they want beside."*

And he will give you spiritual food too. When God saves his people he gives them spiritual food to live upon till they get to heaven. God does not give us treatment like that which the Duke of Alva measured out to a city which had surrendered. He agreed to give the inhabitants their lives, but when they complained that they were dying of hunger he maliciously replied, "I granted you your lives, but I did not promise you food." Our God does not talk so. He includes in the promise of salvation all that goes with it; and you shall have all you really want between here and heaven, wherefore fear not.

VI. Lastly, time fails me: but I was going to close with that word in the twenty-seventh of Acts, the twenty-fourth verse, where the Lord sent his angel to his servant Paul in the time of the shipwreck, and said to him, "Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Cæsar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee."

So I pray God that all perils in the future— all imminent ills and dangers which surround you now— may not cause you

to fear, for the Lord will not suffer a hair of your head to perish, but he that has made you will bear you through, and make you more than conquerors too.

Tried people of God, rest in the Lord, and your confidence shall be your strength. You have often heard of the boy on board ship in time of storm who was the only person that was not afraid. When they asked him why he did not fear, he said w Because my father is at the helm." We have still better cause for casting away all fear, for not only is our Father at the helm but our Father is everywhere, holding the winds and the waves in the hollow of his hand. No trouble can happen to you or to me but what he ordains or permits. No trial can come but what he will restrain and overrule. No evil can happen but what shall certainly work for good to them that love God. Therefore be not afraid. What though the howling tempest yell, and the ship creak and groan as she labours among the waves, and you think that nothing but destruction awaits you, fear not! Let not fear linger for a single moment in the presence of the eternal Christ who says, "It is I. Be not afraid." May God grant that his own "Fear not" may go home to the heart of every one here present in some form or other; and unto his name be glory, world without end. Amen.

NINE
THE GLORIOUS MASTER AND THE
SWOONING DISCIPLE

SERMON GIVEN ON JANUARY 7, 1872

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 1:17-18

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 18

*And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead.
And he laid his right hand upon me, saying
unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:
I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I
am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the
keys of hell and of death.*

REVELATION 1:17-18

Low thoughts of the Lord Jesus Christ are exceedingly mischievous to believers. If you sink your estimate of him you shift everything else in the same proportion. He who thinks lightly of the Savior thinks so much the less of the evil of sin;

and, consequently, he becomes callous as to the past, careless as to the present, and venturesome as to the future. He thinks little of the punishment due to sin, because he has small notions of the atonement made for sin. Christian activity for right is also abated, as well as holy horror of wrong. He who thinks lightly of the Lord Jesus renders to him but small service; he does not estimate the Redeemer's love at a rate high enough to stir his soul to ardor; if he does not count the blood wherewith he was redeemed an unholy thing, yet he thinks it a small matter, not at all sufficient to claim from him life-long service. Gratitude is weak when favors are undervalued. He serves little who loves little, and he loves little who has no sense of having been greatly beloved. The man who thinks lightly of Christ also has but poor comfort as to his own security. With a little Savior I am still in danger, but if he be the mighty God, able to save unto the uttermost, then am I safe in his protecting hand, and my consolations are rich and abounding. In these, and a thousand other ways, an unworthy estimate of our Lord will prove most solemnly injurious. The Lord deliver us from this evil.

If our conceptions of the Lord Jesus are very enlarged, they will only be his due. We cannot exaggerate here. He deserves higher praise than we can ever render to him. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high is he above our loftiest conceptions. Even when the angels strike their loudest notes, and chant his praises most exultingly on their highest festal days, the music falls far short of his excellence. He is higher than a seraph's most soaring thought! Rise then, my brethren, as on eagle's wings, and let your adoring souls magnify and extol the Lord your Savior.

When our thoughts of Jesus are expanded and elevated, we obtain right ideas upon other matters. In the light of his love and

atonement sacrifice, we see the depth of the degradation from which such a Redeemer has uplifted us, and we hate, with all our hearts, the sins which pierced such an altogether lovely one, and made it needful for the Lord of life to die. Forming some adequate estimate of what Jesus has done for us, our gratitude grows, and with our gratitude our love—while love compels us to consecration, and consecration suggests heroic self-denying actions. Then are we bold to speak for him, and ready, if needs be, to suffer for him while we feel we could give up all we have to increase his glory, without so much as dreaming that we had made a sacrifice.

Let your thoughts of Christ be high, and your delight in him will be high too; your sense of security will be strong, and with that sense of security will come the sacred joy and peace which always keep the heart which confidently reposes in the mediator's hands. If thou wouldst thyself be raised, let thy thoughts of Christ be raised. If thou wouldst rise above these earthly toys, thou must have higher and more elevated thoughts of him who is high above all things. Earth sinks as Jesus rises. Honor the Son even as thou wouldst honor the Father, and, in so doing, thy soul shall be sanctified and brought into closer fellowship with the great Father of Spirits, whose delight it is to glorify his Son.

My object, this morning, is to suggest some few truths to your recollection which may help to set the Lord Jesus on a glorious high throne within your hearts. My motto, this morning, will be—

*"Bring forth the royal diadem
And crown him Lord of all."*

My anxiety is that he may be crowned with many crowns in all these many hearts, and that you may now perform those

exercises of faith, those delightful acts of adoring love, which shall bring to him great glory.

I. Coming to the text, the first thing we notice in it is **THE DISCIPLE OVERPOWERED**. We will meditate a little while upon that. John writes, "And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead."

The beloved disciple was favored with an unusual vision of his glorified Lord. In the blaze of that revelation even his eagle eye was dimmed and his holy soul was overwhelmed. He was overpowered, but not with ecstasy. At first sight it would have seemed certain that excess of delight would have been John's most prominent feeling; it would appear certain that to see his long lost Master, whom he had so dearly loved, would have caused a rush of joy to John's soul, and that if overpowered at all, it would have been with ecstatic bliss. That it was not so is clear from the fact that our Lord said to him, "Fear not." Fear was far more in the ascendant than holy joy. I will not say that John was unhappy, but, certainly, it was not delight which prostrated him at the Savior's feet; and I gather from this that if we, in our present embodied state, were favored with an unveiled vision of Christ, it would not make a heaven for us; we may think it would, but we know not what spirit we are of. Such new wine, if put into these old bottles, would cause them to burst. Not heaven but deadly faintness would be the result of the beatific vision, if granted to these earthly eyes. We should not say, if we could behold the King in his beauty as we now are, "I gazed upon him, and my heart leaped for joy," but like John we should have to confess, "When I saw him I fell at his feet as dead." There is a time for everything, and this period of our sojourn in flesh and blood is not the season for seeing the Redeemer face to face: that vision will be ours when we are fully prepared for it. We are as yet too feeble to bear the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. I do not say but

what we are so prepared by his grace that, if now he took us away from this body, we should be able to bear the splendor of his face; but, I do say, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, and that when, as an exception to the rule, a mortal man is permitted to behold his Lord, his flesh and blood are made to feel the sentence of death within themselves, and to fall as if slain by the revelation of the Lord. We ought, therefore, to thank God that "he holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it." That face which shines as the sun in its strength, manifests its love by wearing as yet a concealing veil. Be grateful, that while you are to be here to serve him, and to do his will in suffering for him, he does not deprive you of your power to serve or suffer, by overwhelming you with excessive revelations. It is an instance of the glory of God's grace that he conceals his majesty from his people, and wraps clouds and darkness round about him; this he does not to deny his saints a bliss which they might covet, but to preserve them from an unseasonable joy, which, as yet, they are not capable of bearing. We shall see him as he is, when he shall be like him, but not till then. That for a while we may be able to perform the duties of this mortal life, and not lie perpetually stretched like dead men at his feet, he doth not manifest himself to us in the clear light which shone upon the seer of Patmos.

I beg you to notice with care this beloved disciple in his fainting fit, and note first, the occasion of it. He says, "I saw him." This it was that made him faint with fear. "I saw HIM." He had seen him on earth, but not in his full glory as the first begotten from the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. When our Savior dwelt among men, in order to their redemption, he made himself of no reputation, and took upon himself the form of a servant; for this reason he restrained the flashings of his Deity, and the godhead shone through the manhood with

occasional and softened rays. But now, Jesus was resplendent as the ancient of days, girt with a golden girdle, with a countenance outshining the sun in its strength, and this even the best beloved apostle could not endure. He could gaze with dauntless eye upon the throne of jasper and the rainbow of emerald, he could view with rapture the sea of glass like unto crystal, and the seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, but the vision of the Lord himself was too much for him. He who quailed not when the doors of both heaven and hell were opened to him in vision, yet fell lifeless when he saw the Lord. None either in earth or heaven can compare with Jesus in glory. Oh for the day when we shall gaze upon his glory and partake in it. Such is his sacred will concerning us. "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." To bear that sight we shall need to be purified and strengthened. God himself must enlarge and strengthen our faculties, for as yet, like the disciples upon labor, we should be bewildered by the brightness.

Here was the occasion of his faintness. But what was the reason why a sight of Christ so overcame Him? I take it we have the reason in the text, it was partly fear. But, why fear? Was not John beloved of the Lord Jesus? Did he not also know the Savior's love to him? Yes, but for all that, he was afraid, or else the Master would not have said to him, "Fear not." That fear originated partly in a sense of his own weakness and insignificance in the presence of the divine strength and greatness. How shall an insect live in the furnace of the sun? How can mortal eye behold unquenched the light of Deity, or mortal ear hear that voice which is as many waters? We are such infirmity, folly and nothingness, that, if we have but a glimpse of omnipotence, awe and reverence prostrate us to the earth. Daniel tells us that when he saw the great vision by the river Hiddekel, there remained no strength in him, for his comeliness was

turned in on him into corruption, and he fell into a deep sleep upon his face. John, also, at that time, perhaps, perceived more impressively than ever the purity and immaculate boldness of Christ: and, being conscious of his own imperfection, he felt like Isaiah when he cried "Woe is me, I am undone; for I am a man of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the Lord of Hosts." Even his faith, though fixed upon the Lord, our righteousness, was not able to bear him up under the first surprising view of uncreated holiness. Methinks his feelings severe like those of the patriarch of Uz, when he says, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." The most spiritual and sanctified minds, when they fully perceive the majesty and holiness of God, are so greatly conscious of the great disproportion between themselves and the Lord, that they are humbled and filled with holy awe, and even with dread and alarm. The reverence which is commendable is pushed by the infirmity of our nature into a fear which is excessive, and that which is good in itself is made deadly unto us; so prone are we to err on the one side or the other.

There is no doubt, too, that a part of the fear which caused John to swoon arose from a partial ignorance or forgetfulness of his Lord. Shall we charge this upon one who wrote one of the gospels, and three choice epistles? Yes, it was doubtless so, because the Master went on to instruct and teach him in order to remove his fear. He needed fresh knowledge or old truths brought home with renewed power, in order to cure his dread. As soon as he knew his Lord he recovered his strength. The wonderful person who then stood before him bade him know that he was the first and the last, the ever living and Almighty Lord. The knowledge of Jesus is the best remedy for fears: when we are better acquainted with our Lord we part company with half our doubts—these bats and owls cannot bear the sun.

Jesus in his person, work, offices, and relations, is a mine of consolation; every truth which is connected with him is an argument against fear: when our heart shall be filled with perfect love to him fear will be cast out, as Satan was cast down from heaven. Study then your Lord. Make it your life's object to know him. Seek the Holy Spirit's illumination, and the choice privilege of fellowship, and your despondency and distress will vanish as night birds fly to hide themselves when the day breaketh. It is folly to walk in sorrow when we might constantly rejoice. We do not read that John was any more afraid after the Lord had discoursed lovingly upon his own glorious person and character. That divine enlightenment which was given to his mind, purged from it any secret mistake and misjudgment which had created excessive fear.

But, while we thus notice the occasion and the reasons, we must not forget the extent to which John was overpowered. He says, "I fell at his feet as dead;" He does not say in a partial swoon, or overcome with amazement: he uses a very strong description, "I fell at his feet as dead." He was not dead, but he was "as dead;" that is to say, he could see no more, the blaze of Jesus' face had blinded him; he could hear no more, the voice like the sound of many waters had stunned his ear; no bodily faculty retained its power. His soul, too, had lost consciousness under the pressure put upon it; he was unable to think much less to act. He was stripped not only of self-glory and strength, but almost of life itself. This is by no means a desirable natural condition, but it is much to be coveted spiritually. It is an infinite blessing to us to be utterly emptied, stripped, spoiled, and slain before the Lord. Our strength is our weakness, our life is our death, and when both are entirely gone, we begin to be strong and in very deed to live. To lie at Jesus' feet is a right experience; to lie there as sick and wounded is better, but to lie there as dead is best of all; a man is taught in the mysteries of

the kingdom, who comes to that. Moses with dim legal light needs to be told to put off his shoe from off his foot in the presence of the Lord of Hosts, but John is manifestly far in advance of him, because he lies lower, and is like a dead man before the Infinite Majesty. How blessed a death is death in Christ! How divine a thing is life in him. If I might see Christ at this moment upon the terms of instant death, I would joyfully accept the offer, the bliss would far exceed the penalty. But as for the death of all within us, that is of the flesh and of fallen nature, it is beyond measure desirable, and if for nothing else; my soul would pant more and more to see Jesus. May that two-edged sword which cometh out of his mouth smite all my besetting sins; may the brightness of his countenance scorch and burn up in me the very roots of evil: may he mount his white horse and ride through my soul conquering, and to conquer, casting out of me all that is of the old dragon and his inventions, and bringing every thought into subjection to himself. There would I lie at his dear conquering feet, slain by his mighty grace.

Only one other reflection while we look at this fainting apostle, observe well the place where he was overpowered. Oh, lovely thought. "I fell as dead;" but where? "I fell at his feet as dead." It matters not what aileth us if we lie at Jesus' feet. Better be dead there than alive anywhere else. He is ever gentle and tender, never breaking the bruised reed or quenching the smoking flax. In proportion as he perceives that our weakness is manifest to us, in that degree will he display his tenderness. He carrieth the lambs in his bosom, and doth gently lead those that are with young; feebleness wins on him. When he sees a dear disciple prostrate at his feet, he is ready at once to touch him with the hand of his familiar love, and to revive him by his own strength. "He restoreth my soul." "He giveth power unto the faint." He saith unto our pitiful weakness, "Fear not, I am the first and the last." To be as dead were not desirable, but to be as

dead at Jesus' feet is safe and profitable. Well doth our poet say, when expressing his desire to escape from all worldly bonds.

*"But oh, for this, no strength have I,
My strength is at his feet to lie."*

II. And now, having seen the disciple overpowered, I shall ask your consideration of THAT SAME DISCIPLE RESTORED. He was not long in the condition of death, for the Master laid his right hand upon him, and said to him, "Fear not." Here then, we shall notice, that when the children of God become exceeding faint and feeble, and their own sense of impurity and nothingness becomes painful, and even killing to them, the Lord has ways of restoring and reviving their spirits.

And first, he does it by a condescending approach. "He laid his hand upon me." It is noticeable, that in the great cures which our Savior wrought, he almost always touched the patient. He could with a word have healed, but to prove his fellowship with the sick, he put his hand upon the leper, and upon the blind eye, and touched the deaf ear; thus manifesting his condescending contact with the infirmities of our nature. The Master could have spoken a word to John, and have revived him; but he did not stand at a distance, or guard himself with a "Touch me not" but, instead of that, he commenced his care with a touch. No other hand could have revived the apostle, but the hand which was pierced for him had matchless power. There is mighty healing in the royal hand of our Immanuel. When the Holy Spirit inspires us with a sense of the relationship which Christ bears to us, of the sympathy which Christ feels with us, of the kinship and fellow-feeling which reign in Jesus' breast, then are we comforted. To know that he is not ashamed to call us brethren is a wellspring of comfort to a tried child of God; to feel his presence, to perceive

the touch of his hand, and to hear him say: "I am with thee, be not dismayed, for I am thy God," this is new life to our waning spirits. Oh what bliss is this. "In all their afflictions he was afflicted." He is a brother born for adversity, a sympathetic and tender friend touched with a feeling of our infirmities. "He laid his hand upon me." "O child of God, pray for a manifestation of the kinsman Christ to thy soul; ask that he would instruct thee as to the fact that he enters into thy grief, having himself endured the like. Thou art one with him, and he is one with thee; and as surely as the head feels the pain of the members, so does Jesus share in all the sorrows of his people. Let this be a comfort to thee, thou who art now lying as dead before the risen Lord. He comes near to thee, not to kill thee, but to revive thee by most intimate intercourse, talking with thee as a man speaketh with his friend. O man, greatly beloved, be not so overwhelmed with the greatness of thy Lord as to forget his love, his great love, his familiar love, which at this moment lays its hand upon thee.

The same action implies the communication of divine strength. "He laid his right hand upon me." It is the hand of favour, it is also the hand of power. God gives strength to those who have none. He puts power into the faint. When the child of God is brought very low, it is not a mere subject for consideration or theme for reflection that can lift him up: sick men want more than instruction, they require cordials and supports. There must be actual strength and energy imparted to a swooning soul, and, glory be to God, by his own Holy Spirit, Jesus can and does communicate energy to his people in the time of weakness. He is come that we may have life, and that we may have it more abundantly. The omnipotence of God is made to rest upon us, so that we even glory in infirmities. "My grace is sufficient for thee, my strength is made perfect in weakness," is a blessed promise, which has been fulfilled to the letter

to many of us. Our own strength has departed, and then the power of God has flowed in to fill up the vacuum. I cannot explain the process: these are secrets and mysteries to be experienced rather than expounded; but as the coming of the Spirit of God into us first of all makes us live in regeneration, so the renewed coming of the power of God into our soul raises us up from our weakness and our faintness into fresh energy. Be thou encouraged, then, thou fainting spirit today. They that trust upon the Lord shall renew their strength. All power belongeth unto the Lord, and he will give it plenteously to those who have none of their own. Be of good courage and wait upon him for none shall be ashamed who make him their confidence.

Then there followed a word from the Master's own mouth. He spake and said, "Fear not." Here he applied the remedy to the disease. Christ himself is our medicine, as well as our physician. His voice which stilled the sea, also casts out all our fears. The word of God, as we find it in this book, is very consoling; the word of God, as we hear it from Christ's ministers, has great power in it; but the real and true power of the word lies in Jesus THE WORD. When the truth falls fresh from his own lips, then is it power. Right truly did the Master say, "the words which I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." With what power did those syllables fall on the fluttered heart of John—"Fear not." Oh that we might hear the same voice by the Spirit in our inmost souls.

*"Oh might I hear thine heavenly tongue,
But whisper 'Thou art mine.'
Those gentle words should raise my song
To notes almost divine."*

Truly there are many voices and each has its significance, but the voice of Jesus has a heaven of bliss in its every accent.

Let but my beloved speak to me, and I will forego the angelic symphonies. Though he should only say, "Fear not," and not a word beyond, it were worth worlds to see him open his mouth unto us. But you say, can we still hear Jesus speak to us? Ay, by his Spirit. His Spirit still hath fellowship with the hearts of men, and he can bring the word of Scripture right home into the soul, until it becometh no more the letter but the living, quickening word of Christ. Do you know what I mean by this? If you do not, it is not possible to tell you; and if you do, you will need no explanation. Jesus speaks to the heart, the truth comes not in word only, but in demonstration of the Spirit and with power. O thou troubled believer, thou who art abashed by the very glory thou hast been made to see, be assured that Jesus will draw near unto thy soul, and touch thee, and speak with thee, so that thou shalt be strengthened with might by his Spirit in thine inner man. Had John not fallen as dead, he might never have heard the voice and felt the touch of his Lord. Sweet is the fall which leads to such a rise again.

In order to complete the cure of his servant our Lord went on to give him fuller instruction in that very matter which had overpowered him. Sometimes like cures like. If in a certain sense it is true of divine revelations, that "shallow draughts intoxicate the brain," it is assuredly true that "drinking largely sobers us again." If a glimpse of Christ makes holy men to faint, a clearer sight of him will set them on their feet again. Our Lord went on to instruct John in the glory of his person and power, that his fears might be removed. And truly, brethren, John was in a right state for such celestial instruction; he who is lowly is ready to learn mysteries. He was like wax ready for the seal; or as paper cleansed of all other writing. Because we think we know, we know not; but the death of the pride of knowledge is the birth of true understanding. The Lord loves best for pupils those who lie lowest before him. "The meek will he

guide in judgment, the meek will he teach his way." "With the lowly is wisdom." Where Jesus is the teacher, and instructs the heart in the things concerning himself, the soul is made to inherit substance, and its treasures are filled. Blessed are the men who are taught by him who is the wisdom of God, even though while they watch at the posts of his doors they lie as dead men; they are blessed, for they shall find life, and obtain favor of the Lord.

III. We will now advance to the third point of our discourse which contains the pith of it. We have observed the beloved disciple overpowered and we have seen him afterwards revived; now we shall consider for awhile THE SAME DISCIPLE STILL FURTHER INSTRUCTED. Let me have your attention, dear friends, to the glorious truth which is now opening up before us in the text. John was first of all instructed as to the Lord's person. "Fear not, I am the first and the last; I am he that liveth and was dead." As to the Lord's person, Jesus revealed to his disciple that he was most truly divine. "I am the first and the last." This language can be used of none but God himself; none but he is first; none but he is last; none but God can be first and last. Now, our Lord Jesus Christ was evidently first. He existed before he was born into the world. We read, "a body hast thou prepared me." Then Christ was a previously existing one for whom that body was prepared; and he it is who said, "Lo, I come, to do thy will O God." He came into the world, but he had from old eternity dwelt in the bosom of the Father. John the Baptist was born into the world before the Savior, of whom he was the forerunner, but what does he say? His testimony is "he, coming after me, is preferred before me, for he was before me." He is first in order of honor because first in order of existence. John was the elder as man, but as God the Lord Jesus is from everlasting. Go back in history as far as you will; with one leap ascend to the days of Moses, and there is Christ before

you, for we read: "Let us not tempt Christ as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents." There was Christ, then, in the wilderness vexed by the people. He it was whose voice then shook the earth, but who will yet shake not the earth only but also heaven. Go further back to Abraham, and we find the angel of the covenant there. Our Lord expressly says, "Before Abraham was I am." Mark you, not "I was," but "I am;"—he speaks in a God-like manner. Ascend even to the age of Noah, the second parent of our race, and there we discover Jesus Christ preaching to those spirits who are now in prison, who sometime were disobedient, when the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing." It was Christ in Noah, who by the Spirit preached to the antediluvian sinners. We go further back to the creation of the world, and are find "In the beginning was the word, and the word was God;" and if we fly back to old eternity, before the creating hand commenced its work, we find in Proverbs, the eighth chapter, the witness of the incarnate wisdom himself. "I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled. Before the hills was I brought forth: While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world." Our Lord is thus the first: and so assuredly will he be the last; for all things consist and subsist through the perpetual emanations of his infinite power; and when the kings of the earth shall sleep in the dust, and the popovers thereof shall have passed away, when the treasures of time shall have melted, and its most enduring memorials shall have gone like the mists of the morning, he shall be the same, and of his years there shall be no end. Christ is the true Melchisedec, without beginning of days or end of years, "made a priest not after the law of a carnal command-

ment, but after the power of an endless life." This was revealed to John for his comfort, and it stands true to us today, and is equally fraught with consolation.

Moreover, by the words "the first and the last" are signified, in most languages, the sum and substance of all things. We say sometimes the top and the bottom of it is so and so; we mean that it is the whole of it. And the Greeks were wont to say, "This is the prow and stern of the business," meaning that it is the whole. And so Jesus Christ, in being first and last, is all in all. And, truly, it is so in the working of redemption and salvation; he begins, carries on, completes; he asks no creature help and will have none. To us he is the author and the finisher of our faith, the alpha of our first comfort, and the omega of our final bliss. We worship Christ as the sum and substance of all good. Herein is wealth of comfort, and, therefore, did the Lord instruct his servant, John, therein, he did as much as say, "John, thou needest no ear, for I am no enemy, no stranger, no avenging spirit, but God himself, in whom thou has learned to put thy trust. Thou believest in God, believe also in me." To every trembling believer we would say, Why dost thou fear? Jesus is all. Art thou afraid of him, thy brother, thy Savior, thy friend. Then, what dost thou fear? Anything old? He is the first. Anything to come? He is the last. Anything in all the world? He is all in all, from the first to the last. What dost thou want? If thou hast him thou hast all. Dost thou need more than all? Hast thou discovered a need within thy spirit, a grievous lack which troubles thee? How can that be when thy Lord Jesus fills all things, and all things are yours in him. If thou hast, indeed, placed thy confidence in him, and made him all thy salvation, to what end and for what cause shouldst thou be troubled with any sort of fear? Having a divine person to be thy protector and thy Savior, Why shouldst thou be afraid?

In addition, however, to rendering to John the comfort

derived from his person, our blessed Master went on to comfort him with the truth of his self existence. "I am he that liveth," saith he, "or I am the living one." Creatures are not living in themselves, they borrow leave to be; to God alone it belongs to exist necessarily. He is the I AM, and such is Christ. Why then dost thou fear? If the existence of thy Lord, thy Savior, were precarious and dependent upon some extraneous circumstances, thou wouldst have cause for fear, for thou wouldst be in constant jeopardy. If he had to borrow permission to be, derived strength from creatures, and needed to look hither and thither for strength to sustain his own existence, thou wouldst be ever in danger, and consequently in distress; but, since Jesus cannot possibly cease to be, or be other than he is, or less than he is, what occasion canst thou have for alarm? A self-existent Savior, and yet a troubled Christian! Oh, let it not be so. "Fear not, I am he that liveth."

And, if these two sources of consolation should not suffice, the Lord in the glory of his tenderness mentions a third—viz, his atoning death. He says, "I was dead," the original more correctly rendered is "was made dead." Here we come upon the human nature of our Redeemer. As God and as man he had two natures, but he was not two persons. As one person he ever lives, and yet he was made to die. He came into this world in human form that he might be capable of death; the pure spirit of God could not die, it was not possible that he, the I AM, could be subject to death; but he allied himself with humanity, and in that human form Jesus could die, and did die. In very deed, and truth, and not in semblance; Jesus bowed his head, and gave up the ghost, and they laid his corpse in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. Here to the child of God is a fruitful source of consolation. He died, then the atonement is complete; without the shedding of blood there is no remission, but the death of the Son of God brings plenteous pardon. There must

be in the death of such a one of sufficient merit to remove guilt and cleanse transgression. Is it not written, "He hath washed us from our sins in his own blood?" Dost thou not hear that song in heaven? Will not its music make thee glad? His own blood hath washed thee; if thou believest in him thou art clean. Look to Calvary, and as thou lookest there and perceivest that he was dead, "fear not."

And then the master declared his endless life, "I am alive for evermore." He who offered up the atonement lives again to claim the effect of his sacrifice. He has presented the meritorious sacrifice, and now he has gone to heaven to plead the sacrifice before the throne of God, and to lay claim to the place which he has prepared for them that love him. Thou hast no dead Savior to trust to: thou reliest in him who once died—this is comfort to thee, but he lives, the great Redeemer lives. He has risen from the tomb; he has climbed the hills of heaven; he sits at the right hand of the Father, prepared to defend his people. If thou hadst a Christ in the sepulcher that were sorrow upon sorrow; but thou hast a Christ in heaven, who can die no more. Be thou of good cheer.

And then, to close the whole, the Master said "Amen, and hath the keys of hell and of death." The mediatorial office which Christ now occupies is one of great power. He is "God over all, blessed for ever." His dominion is over land and seas and over heaven and the regions of the dead. There is nothing hid from the energy of his power. He is Lord of all. "He hath the keys of hell and of death." By the word "hell" may be meant here the entire invisible land, the whole realm of spirits: Christ is Lord there, adored in heaven and feared in hell. But, if we restrict the sense to the common meaning of the word in our language, he is Lord of hell. The devil despite his malignity can do nothing but what Christ permits him. He is a chained enemy; he may rave and rage, but he cannot injure the child of

God. Christ hath him ever in check, and when he permits him to wander abroad, he makes the wrath of man and the wrath of devils to praise him, and the remainder he doth restrain. Why dost thou fear therefore? Thou sayest "I am a sinner—Satan will prevail against me." But Christ saith "I am master of Satan, I am Lord of hell, he cannot prevail against thee." He cannot leave hell unless Christ permits him, for Christ can turn the key and lock him in. He could not take thee there, for Christ has locked thee out and keeps the key. Thou art eternally and perpetually safe from all the machinations of the powers of darkness. And dost thou tremble at death? Is it that which alarms thee? Have the pains and groans and dying strifes sounded in thine ear till thou art timid and afraid? Then remember Christ hath the keys of death. Thou canst not die until he permits. If men of blood should seek thy life, they could not smite thee till thy Lord should allow it; and if plagues and death should fly about thee, and thousands die at thy right hand, and ten thousands at thy left, thou canst not die till the Lord wills it. Thou art immortal till he saith "return." The iron gate of death opens not of its own accord to thee, a thousand angels could not drag thee to the tomb; thou comest there only at his call. Fear not, therefore, but remember that death is no longer death to the saints of God, they fall asleep in Jesus. Since thy Lord will be with thee, it will not be death to die; thou shalt find death to thee an enemy muzzled and chained: the wasp shall have lost its sting, it shall be a bee that shall bring thee honey; out of the lion, as Samson did, shalt thou get sweetness to thyself. Death is overborne, and when it arrives, Jesus will come with it, and make thy dying bed most soft to thee.

Remember one thought more. He that hath the key of death will annihilate death; for thy body shall not become the prey of the worm for ever. At the trump of the archangel thy body shall rise again. There shall not a bone or a piece of a bone

of one of his people perish, their very dust is precious in his sight. They sleep awhile, and rest from their labors; but, from beds of dust and silent clay, the Lord of life shall call them all. O death, where is thy sting! O grave, wherein thy victory! Since Jesus who died and ever lives has the keys of death and hell at his girdle, we will not fear to die, let the time appointed be when it may. So that you see there was abundance of comfort for the sinking spirit of the apostle John.

Let me close by saying, in the glory and exaltation of Christ is the saint's cordial. Some of us have tried it when our mouths were full of bitterness, and we have rejoiced and been exceeding glad at the thought. A reigning Savior makes a joyful people. Run there for comfort, ye sons of sorrow: rejoice ye in your king all ye his saints.

But this same glorious Savior will be the sinner's terror. They shall hide their faces at the last from the brightness of his glory; they shall ask the hills and mountains to conceal them from his face who sits upon the throne. A glorious monarch is the rebel's horror. By so much as he whom you have rejected is great and glorious, by so much shall the punishment from his right hand be intolerable. Oh that you were wise enough to cease from fighting with the Almighty Lord.

But, lastly, he is also the penitent's hope; for now, to-day, if you would be forgiven, the exalted Savior presents himself to you most freely. He is exalted on high, but what for? It is to give "repentance and remission of sins." The greater he is the better for those who need great mercy; the more royal and kingly he is the better for humble, broken, bleeding hearts. "Oh, kiss the son, lest he be angry and ye perish from the way while his wrath is kindled but a little." From the highest heaven he stretches down the silver scepter; touch it by a simple faith. May he enable you to do it, and though as yet you fall at his feet as dead, you shall hear him say this morning, "Fear not, I am he

that liveth, and was dead, and am alive for evermore, and am, therefore, able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by me, seeing I ever live to make intercession for thee." God bless you, dear friends, by his Spirit.

Amen.

TEN
CHRIST WITH THE KEYS OF DEATH
AND HELL

SERMON GIVEN ON OCTOBER 3, 1869

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 1:18

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 15

"I have the keys of hell and of death."

REVELATION 1:18.

THEN hell and death, terrible powers as they are, are not left to riot without government. Death is a land of darkness, as darkness itself, without any order, yet a sovereign eye surveyeth it, and a master hand holdeth its key. Hell also is a horrible region, where powers of evil and of terror hold their high court and dread assembly; but hell trembles at the presence of the Lord, and there is a throne higher than the throne of evil. Let us rejoice that nothing in heaven, or earth, or in places under the earth, is left to itself to engender anarchy. Everywhere, serene above the floods, the Lord sitteth King for ever and ever. No

province of the universe is free from the divine rule. Things do not come by chance. Nowhere doth chance and chaos reign, nowhere is evil really and permanently enthroned. Rest assured that the Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all; for if the lowest hell and death own his government, much more all things that are on this lower world.

It is delightful for us to observe, as we read this chapter, that government of hell and of death is vested in the person of the Man Christ Jesus; he who holdeth the keys of these dreadful regions, is described by John as "One like unto the Son of man," and we know that he was our Lord Jesus Christ himself. John saw a strange and glorious change in him, but still recognised the old likeness, perhaps impressed by the nail-prints and other marks of manhood which he had seen in him while yet he was in the days of his flesh. What an honour is thus conferred upon mankind! Unto which of the angel said he at any time, "Thou shalt bear the keys of hell and of death"? Yet these keys are committed to the Son of man, and Jesus Christ, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, made in all points like unto his brethren, ruleth over all. Yet manhood is not so exalted as of itself and apart from Godhead, for while the description given of our Lord by John, as he saw him at Patmos, is evidently human, yet is it also convincingly divine. There is a glow of glory about that mysterious manhood, which stood between the golden candlesticks, that comes not of the Virgin Mary nor of Nazareth, but is alight apart, belonging only to the everlasting God, whose Son the Redeemer is, and whose equal he counts it not robbery to be. Jesus, in essence, is "God over all, blessed for ever." Let us rejoice, then, in the condescension of God, in taking man into such union with Godhead, that now in the person of Christ man hath dominion over all the works of God's hands; and he ruleth not only over all sheep and oxen, and all

fowl of the air, and fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea, but death and Hades also are committed to the dominion of the glorified man. "At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

The metaphor of keys is intended, no doubt, to set forth the double thought of our Lord's possessing both the rightful and the actual dominion over death and hell. The rightful dominion, I say, for often it has been the custom when kings have come to the gates of loyal cities, for the mayor, or high bailiff, or governor of the city, to present the keys in formal state, in recognition that his majesty was the lawful owner and rightful sovereign of the borough. So Christ hath the keys of hell and death — that is to say, he is rightfully the Lord over those dark regions, and rules them by indefeasible title of sovereignty. But in commonest life the key is associated with actual possession and power. When the tenant gives up the key to the landlord, then the owner has the house again under his power, and in his possession, by that act and deed. So Christ is not only *de jure* (according to right), but *de facto* (according to fact), Lord over hell and death. He actually rules and manages in all the issues of the grave, and overrules all the councils of hell, restraining the mischievous devices of Satan, or turning them to subserve his own designs of good. Our Lord Jesus Christ still is supreme; his kingdom, willingly or unwillingly, extends over all existences in whatever regions they may be.

It may be well here to remark, that the word translated "hell," though it may be rightfully referred to the region of lost and damned spirits, yet need not be restricted thereto. The word is "Hades," which signifies the dwelling place of spirits, and so it may include both heaven and hell; no doubt it does

include them both in many places, and I think in this. Our Lord then hath the keys of heaven, and hell, and death. Wherever separate spirits are now existing, Christ is King, and over the iron gate through which men pass into the disembodied state, the authority of Christ is paramount. All hail! thou brightness of the Father's glory, be thou evermore adored!

Come we now to consider this text in the following lights; first, as we may be enabled and strengthened, we shall consider the power of the keys; secondly, we shall consider the key of this power; and then, thirdly, the choice reflections locked up in this doctrine of the keys.

I. What is intended by THE POWER OF THESE KEYS here mentioned?

A key is first of all used for opening, and hence our Lord can open the gates of death and hell. It is his to open the gate of the separated spirits, to admit his saints one by one to their eternal felicity. When the time shall come for us to depart out of this world unto the Father, no hand but that of the Well-beloved shall put that golden key into the lock and open the pearly gate which admits the righteous to the spirit-land. When we have tarried awhile as disembodied spirits in Paradise, it will be Christ's work to open the gates of the grave wherein our bodies shall have been confined, in order that at the tramp of the archangel we may rise to immortality. He is the resurrection and the life; because he lives, we shall live also. At his bidding every bolt of death's prison house shall be drawn, and the huge iron gates of the sepulchre shall be rolled back. Then shall the body sown in weakness be raised in power, sown in dishonour be raised in glory. We need not ask the question, "Can these dry bones live?" when we see in the hands of our omnipotent Saviour the golden key. Death in vain shall have gathered up the carcases of millions as his treasure, he shall lose all these treasures in a moment, when the Lord shall let go his captives,

not for price nor for reward. In the Egypt of the grave no Israelite shall remain a prisoner; there shall not a hoof be left behind; of all that the Father gave to Christ he will lose nothing, but will surely raise it up at the last day. Christ has purchased the bodies as well as the souls of his people; he hath redeemed them by blood, and their mortal frames are the temples of the Holy Ghost; rest assured he will not lose a part of his purchase. It is not the will of our Father in heaven that the Redeemer should be defrauded of any part of his purchased possession. "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise."

But a key is also used to shut the door, and even so Jesus will both shut in and shut out. His golden key will shut his people in in heaven, as Noah was shut in the ark —

*"Far from a world of grief and sin
With God eternally shut in."*

There is no fear that glorified saints shall fall from their high estate, or that they shall perish after all the salvations which they have experienced. Heaven is the place of eternal safety. There the gates shall be fast shut by which their foes could enter, or by which their joys could leave them. But, alas! there is the dark side to this shutting of the gate. It is Christ, who, with his key shall shut the gates of heaven against unbelievers. When once the Master of the house hath risen up and hath shut to the door, it will be useless for mere professors to come with anxious knock and bitter cry, "Lord, Lord, open unto us;" for I wot that the Son of David, when he shutteth, shutteth so that no man openeth, and he himself repenteth not of what he has done. Once let him close mercy's gate upon the soul of a man, and the iron bar shall never be uplifted. O may none of you know what it is to see Christ shut the door of

heaven in your face. It will be terrible when you are expecting to enter into the marriage supper to find yourselves thrust forth into "outer darkness, where shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth." Jesus, with his sovereign key, has locked out of heaven all sinners who die impenitent, and shut out of heaven all sin; shut out of heaven all temptation, all trouble, and all pain and death; shut out of heaven all the temptations of the devil, and not even the howlings of that dog of hell shall be heard across the jasper walls of that New Jerusalem.

A key is used to shut and to open, and so it is used to shut in, in reference to hell, those spirits who are immured there. "Between us and you," said Abraham to Dives, "there is a great gulf fixed: so that they that which would pass hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence." It is Christ's key that hath shut in the lost spirits, so that they cannot roam by way of respite, nor escape by way of pardon. May you never be so shut in. Christ hath the key by which he shutteth in Satan. He is to be bound for a thousand years, but Jesus shall hold the chain, for only our Immanuel could bind this old dragon. When temptation is kept away from a Christian it is the Saviour's restraining power which holdeth back the arch enemy; and if the enemy cometh in like a flood it is by permission of Jesus that the trial comes. Every roaming of the lion of the pit is permitted by our Master, or he could never go forth on his devouring errands. The key that shall bind the old dragon in those blessed days of the millennial rest, is in our Lord's power, and the final triumph, when no sin shall any further be known on earth, and evil shall be pent up in the grim caverns of hell, will be achieved by Christ Jesus, the Man, the Mediator, our Lord and God. To open, then, and to shut out, to shut in and to shut out, these are the work of the keys.

By the keys we must further understand here that our Lord rules, for the key is the Oriental metaphor for government. He

shall have the key of David: "the government shall be upon his shoulder." We understand by Christ's having the keys of hell that he rules over all that are in hell; hence he rules over the damned spirits. They would not in this life have this Man to rule over them, but in the life to come they must submit whether they will or not. In that seething caldron every wave of fire is guided by the will of the Man Christ, and the mark of his sovereignty is on every iron chain. This the ungodly will be compelled to feel with terror, for although the ferocity of their natures will remain, yet the boastfulness of their pride shall be taken from them. Though they would still revolt, they shall find themselves hopelessly fettered, and powerless to accomplish their designs. Though they would fain continue stouthearted as Pharaoh, and cry, "Who is the Lord, that we should obey his voice?" they shall find their loins loosed like Belshazzar's on that dreadful night when his city was destroyed; they shall wring their hands in anguish and bite their tongues in despair. One of the great terrors of the lost in hell will be this, that he who came to save was rejected by them, and now only reveals himself to them as mighty to destroy. He who held out the silver sceptre when they would not touch it, shall for ever break them with a rod of iron for their wilful impenitence. Ye despisers, behold and wonder! If ye will not honour the Lord willingly, ye shall submit by force of arms. What must be the consternation of those that were loudest against Christ on earth, the men who denied his deity, the infidels who vented curses upon his blessed name— your Voltaires and Tom Paines, who were never satisfied except when they uttered bitter words against the Man of Nazareth? What will be their amazement! What confusion to the wretch who said he would crush the wretch, to find himself crushed by him whom he despised! What consternation and confusion shall overwhelm that man who said he lived in the twilight of Christianity, to find himself

where the blaze of Christ's glory shall for ever be as a furnace to his guilty soul! O that none of us may know what it is to be ruled in justice by Christ because we would not be ruled by mercy. "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." But beware, ye that forget him, lest he tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver.

As in hell Christ has power over all the damned spirits, so our text implies that he has power over all the devils. It was wilfulness, doubtless, that made Satan revolt against God. Peradventure, Milton's poetic surmise is not far from the truth, and Satan did think it "better to rule in hell than serve in heaven but, fool that he was, he has to serve in hell with a service ten thousand times more irksome than that which would have been his lot in heaven. There, firstborn Son of the Morning, brightest of the angels of God, how happy might have been his perpetual service of the Most High; but now blighted by the scathing thunderbolts of Jehovah, he crawls forth from his den degraded, going like the serpent on his belly, with dust to be, his meat, debased beneath the very beasts of the field, and cursed above all cattle, going forth for meanest ends, seeking to tempt others that they may come into the same loathsome condition with himself. Yet, mark how even in those temptations of his, Satan is ruled by Christ! He permits the foul fiend to tempt, but there is always a "Hitherto shalt thou go, and no further," just as Satan was permitted to try Job up to a certain point, but beyond that point he must not heap up the patriarch's agony; thus in all cases Christ rules Satan by restraining him. Yea, and even in that which he is permitted to do, God strengtheneth his servants so that Satan gets no honour in the contest, but retires continually more and more disgraced by being defeated by the poor sons of Adam. Cunning spirit as he is, he is worsted in the conflict with poor creatures who dwell in

flesh. Ay, and better still, out of all the temptations of Satan, God's people are made to derive profit and strength. In our exercises and conflicts, we are taught our weakness and led to fly to Christ for strength; and so, as Samson's slain lion yielded him honey, out of the eater cometh forth meat, and out of the strong cometh forth sweetness. An abject slave of Christ art thou, o Satan; a very scullion in the kitchen of providence. When thou thinkest most to effect thine own purposes, and to overthrow the Kingdom of Christ on earth, even then what art thou but a mere hack, accomplishing still the purposes of thy Master, whom in vain thou dost blaspheme! Lo, at Christ's girdle are the keys of hell. Let the whole legion of accursed spirits tremble.

Brethren, I have said that the word "Hades" here may include both hell and heaven, or the whole state of separated spirits. Hence we are bound to remark, that our Saviour rules over all the glorified spirits in heaven, and all the angels that are their associates and ministering spirits. Is not this a delightful reflection, that the Redeemer is the King of angels, for in times of danger he can send an angel to strengthen us, or, if needs be, twenty legions of angels would soon find their way to stand side by side with the weak but faithful warrior of the cross. O believer, thou canst never be cast where divine succours cannot reach thee. Angels see their way by night, and journey over mount and sea with unwearied flight, unimpeded by wind or tempest. They can meet thine enemy, the prince of the power of the air, and overcome him for thee; as doubtless oftentimes they do unknown to us, in mysterious battles of the spirits. Thou shalt never be left to perish, while the chariots of God which are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels, are all at the beck and command of him who has redeemed thee with his precious blood.

Joyous is the thought that Jesus rules over all redeemed

spirits in heaven, for we hope to be there soon, and this shall be among our dearest joys that, without temptation, without infirmity, without weariness, we shall serve our Lord day and night in his temple. My brethren, of all the joys of heaven, next to that of being with Christ, one delights to think of serving Christ. Ah! how rapturous will be our song! How zealously we will praise him! How earnest shall be our service! If he should give us commissions to distant worlds, as perhaps he will; if he shall prepare us to become preachers of his truth to creatures in unknown orbs; if he shall call us through revolving ages to publish to new created myriads the wondrous grace of God in Christ, with what ardent pleasure will we accept the service! How constantly, how heartily will we tell out the story of our salvation by the precious blood of Jesus! O that we could serve him here as we wish; but we shall serve him there without fault or flaw. Oh, happy heaven, because Jesus hath the key of it, and reigns supreme, when shall we stand upon thy sea of glass before his throne?

One more remark is wanted to complete the explanation of the power of the keys. Our Lord is said to have the keys of death, from which we gather that all the issues of death are at his alone disposal. No man can die unless as Jesus opens the mystic door of death. Even the ungodly man owes his spared life to Christ. It is the intercession and the interposition of Jesus that keeps breath even in the swearer's nostrils. Long since hadst thou been consumed in the fire of God's wrath, O sinner, had not Jesus used his authority to keep thee out of the jaws of death. As for his saints, it is their consolation that their death is entirely in his hands. In the midst of fever and pestilence, we shall never die until he wills it; in the times of the greatest healthiness, when all the air is balm, we shall not live a second longer than Jesus has purposed; the place, the circumstance, the exact second of our departure, have all been appointed by him,

and settled long ago in love and wisdom. A thousand angels would not hurl us to the grave, nor could a host of cherubim confine us there one moment after Jesus said, "Arise." This is our comfort. We are "immortal till our work is done;" mortal still, but immortal also. Let us never fear death, then, but rather rejoice at the approach of it, since it comes at our dear Bridegroom's bidding. There be some who count it a most notable expectation, that perhaps they may be among the number of those who shall not sleep, but be alive and remain at the Lord's coming. I am sure I would not disturb any joy which they can derive from such a contemplation. For my own part, if I had the choice, I would prefer to die, for it seems to me that such as do not die, while they cannot have any preference over them that fall asleep (for we are told they shall not prevent them that are asleep) will lose much of desirable experience. They will never be able to say in heaven, "I was made like unto my dying Saviour;" they can never say that they have slept in the grave as he did; they can never say, "My body came forth in the resurrection as his did." I would fain be in all points made like unto my Lord, to have fellowship with him in all respects. "To die," saith the apostle, "is gain." I will add, a gain I would not lose, and "Death is yours," saith the apostle, nor would we have it rent away from us; though the prospect of our Lord's coming is sweet, immeasurably sweet, yet the prospect of going to him meanwhile if so he wills it, is not without its sweetness too. Christ hath the key of death, and therefore death to us is no longer a gate of terror.

Thus have I, as best I could, while suffering much bodily pain, laboured to open up to you what is the power of the keys in the Redeemer's hands.

II. What is THE KEY OF THIS POWER? Whence did Christ obtain this right to have the keys of hell and death? Doth he not derive it first of all from his Godhead?

In the eighteenth verse, he saith, "I am he that liveth," language which only God can use, for while we live, yet it is only with a borrowed life, like the moon that shineth with a borrowed light, and as the moon cannot say, "I am the orb that shineth," neither can man say, "I am he that liveth." God saith, "I am, and there is none beside me," and Jesus being God, claimeth the same self-existence. "I am he that liveth." Now, since Christ is God, he certainly hath power over heaven, and earth, and hell. There can be no dispute concerning the divine prerogative. He is the creator of all things; he is the preserver of all things; all power belongeth unto him. As for all things that are apart from him, they would vanish as a puff of air is gone, if so he willed it : he alone existeth; he alone is; therefore let him wear the crown, let him have undivided rule. That doctrine of the deity of Christ, how I tremble for those who will not receive it! Brethren, if there be anything in the word of God that is clear and plain, it is surely this; if there be any doctrine that is necessary for our salvation, it is this. How could we trust to a mere man? If there be anything that can give us comfort when we come to rest upon Christ, it is just this, that we are not looking to an angel nor depending upon a creature, but are resting upon him who is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the Almighty God. O you who dare trust in a man, I pity you for your credulity; but you who cannot trust in Jesus, the living God, I may well blame you for your unbelief. Having such a rock of our salvation as the ever-living and ever-blessed God, let the thought kindle in our souls the purest joy.

But the key to this power lies also in our Saviour's conquests. He hath the keys of death and hell because he hath actually conquered both these powers. You know how he met hell in the dreadful onset in the garden; how all the powers of darkness there combined against him. Such was the agony of that struggle, that he sweat great drops of blood falling to the

ground; yet he sustained the brunt of that onset without wavering, and kept the field unbeaten. He continued still to wrestle with those evil powers upon the cross, and in that thick midday midnight into which no curious eyes could pry, in the midst of that darkness he continued still to fight, his heel bruised, but breaking meanwhile the dragon's head. Grim was the contest, but glorious was the victory, worthy to be sung by angels in eternal chorus. Take down your sweetest harps ye seraphs, lift up your loudest notes ye cherubim, unto him that fought the dragon and overcame him, to Michael the great archangel of the covenant, unto him be glory for ever and ever. Well doth Jesus deserve to rule the provinces which he hath subdued in fight. He has conquered the king of hell and destroyed the works of the devil, and good right hath he to be King over the domain of the vanquished.

As to death, ye know how our Lord vanquished him! By death he conquered death. When the hands were nailed, they became potent to fight with the grave; when the feet were fastened to the wood, then began they to trample on the sepulchre; when the death pangs began to thrill through every nerve of the Redeemer's body, then his arrows shot through the loins of death, and when his anguished soul was ready to take its speedy flight, and leave his blessed corpse, then did the tyrant sustain a mortal wound. Our Lord's entrance into the tomb was the taking possession of his enemies' stronghold; his sleep within the sepulchre's stony walls was the transformation of the prison into a couch of rest. But especially in the resurrection; when, because he could not be held by the bonds of death, neither could his soul be kept in Hades, he rose again in glory, then did he become the "death of death and hell's destruction," and rightfully was he acknowledged the plague of death and the destruction of the grave. As if to prove that he had the keys of the grave, Jesus passed in and passed out again, and he hath

made free passage now for his people, free entrance, and free exit. Whether, when our Lord died, his soul actually descended into hell itself we will not assert or deny; the elder theologians all asserted that he did, and hence they inserted in the Creed, the sentence, "He descended into hell," meaning, many of them, at any rate, hell itself. It was not till Puritanic times that that doctrine began to be generally questioned, when it was, as I think rightly asserted, that Jesus Christ went into the world of separated spirits, but not into the region of the damned. Well, it is not for us to speak where Scripture is silent, but why may it not be true that the Great Conqueror cast the shadow of his presence over the dens of his enemies as he passed in triumph by the gates of hell? May not the keepers of that infernal gate have seen his star, and trembled as they also beheld their Master like lightning fall from heaven? Would it not add to his glory if those who were his implacable foes were made to know of his complete triumph? At any rate, it was but a passing presence, for we know that swiftly he sped to the gates of heaven, taking with him the repentant thief to be with him that day in Paradise. Jesus had opened thus the grave by going into it, hell by passing by it, heaven by passing into it, heaven again by passing out of it, death again by rising from it into this world, and heaven by his ascension. Thus passing, and repassing, he has proved that the keys are at his girdle. At any rate, by his achievements, by his doings, he hath won for himself the power of the keys.

We have one more truth to remember, that Jesus Christ is installed in this high place of power and dignity by the Father himself, as a reward for what he has done. He was himself to "divide the spoil with the strong," but the Father had promised to give him a "portion with the great." See the reward for the shame which he endured among the sons of men! He stooped lower than the lowest, he has risen higher than the highest; he

wore the crown of thorns, but now he wears the triple crown of heaven, and earth, and hell: he was the servant of servants, but now he is King of kings, and Lord of lords. Earth would not find him shelter, a stable must be the place of his birth, and a borrowed tomb the sepulchre of his dead body; but now, all space is his, time and eternity tremble at his bidding, and there is no creature however minute or vast, that is not subject to him. How greatly hath the Father glorified him whom men rejected and despised I Let us adore him; let our hearts, while we think over these plain but precious truths, come and spread their riches at his feet, and crown him Lord of all.

III. THE PRACTICAL BEARING of the whole subject appears to be this — according to the seventeenth verse— “Fear not.”

This manifestation of Christ, as having the keys of death and hell, was given to the trembling John, who had fallen down with astonishment and dread as one dead, to comfort him, and as if to make this clear the words were spoken, “Fear not.” Beloved, those words I would address to you this morning, “Fear not.” Why need you fear? There, is no possible cause for fear for believers, since Jesus lives. “But I may be very poor,” saith one.

*“Since Christ is rich, can you be poor?
What can you want beside?”*

“But I may be very sick,” saith another. “I will make all their bed in their sickness,” saith the Lord; and since Christ is with you, sickness shall work your soul’s health. “Ah,” saith another, “I may be grievously tempted.” But while he liveth, he will pray for you that your faith fail not, though Satan hath desired to have you. Yes, but you yourselves are very frail, you say, and you fear that in some dark hour that frailty may over-

come your faith. Yes, but he ever liveth, and you are one with him, and who shall destroy you while the vital energy pours from your covenant Head into you as a member of his body? I say again, there is no possible cause for fear to any soul that believeth in Christ. You shall ransack the corruptions of your heart within; you shall count your trials without; you shall imagine all the tribulations that shall come to-morrow; you shall reflect on all the sins that were with you yesterday and in the past; you shall peer into the shades of death and horrors of hell, but I declare solemnly to you that there is nothing in any of these which you, believing in Christ, have any cause to fear. Nay, if they all should unite, if the whole together, the world, the flesh, the devil, in trinity of malice should all come against you, while you have a living faith in a living Saviour, "Fear not" is but the logical inference from that precious fact. Carry this fearlessness in your life, and be happy as a king. Oh, with nothing else but a living Saviour, how rich ought a saint to be! and with everything else, but missing that living Saviour, how miserable the richest and the greatest of men always would be, if they did but know their true state as before the Lord!

Now, observe, that this "Fear not" may be specially applied to the matter of the grave. We need not fear to die, because Jesus has the key of the grave ; we shall never pass through that iron gate with an angel to be our conductor, or some grim executioner to lead us, as it were, through the Traitor's Gate, or into a dreary place of hideous imprisonment. No, Jesus shall come to our dying bed, in all the glory of his supernal splendour, and shall say, "Come with me, from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana; for the day breaketh, and the shadows flee away." The sight of Jesus, as he thrusts in the key and opens that gate of death, shall make you forget the supposed terrors of the grave, for they are but suppositions, and you shall find it sweet to die. Since Jesus hath

the sepulchre's key, never fear it again, never fear it again. Depend upon it, your dying hour will be the best hour you have ever known; your last will be your richest moment, better than the day of your birth will be the day of your death. It shall be the beginning of heaven, the rising of a sun that shall go no more down for ever. Let the fear of death be banished from you by faith in a living Saviour.

Some saints have a fear of the world of spirits. "Oh," say they, "it must be a dreadful thing to enter that unknown land. We have stood and peered as best we could through the mist that gathers over the black river, and have wondered what it must be like to have left the body, and to be flitting, a naked soul, through that land from which no traveller hath e'er returned." Ah! but, perhaps, you imagined that you were sailing into an enemy's country, but Jesus is King in Hades, as well as Lord of earth. It is not as though you crossed the channel from England into France, and were among a people speaking another language, and owning another sovereignty. It is but as passing the Tweed from England to Scotland, you do but pass from one province of your Lord's empire into another, and indeed from a darker into a brighter territory of the same one sovereign. In that spirit land they speak the same tongue, the tongue of the New Jerusalem, which you have already begun to lisp; they own the King whom you here obey; and when you shall enter into the assemblies of those disembodied spirits you shall find them all singing to the praise of the same glorious One whom you have adored to-day, rejoicing in the light which was your light on earth, and triumphing in his love which was your Saviour here below. Be of good courage, Jesus is King of Hades. Fear not.

Neither, brethren, ought we to fear the devil. We ought to be watchful against him, but we must not fear him so that he may get an advantage from our fear. "Resist the devil, and he

will flee from you;" stand trembling and he will attack you worse than ever. The boldness of courageous faith is that which makes the devil tremble. Well may you be brave, for when he comes howling at you like a lion, you may taunt him thus, and say, "Ah, show thy teeth and howl, and yell, but thou art chained; thou canst do no more than threaten me. Thou thinkest to worry me, but thou canst not devour me, and therefore I defy thee. Avaunt, in the name of Jesus Christ who bruised thee, dragon of hell, avaunt!" The courage that shall enable thee thus to deal with the enemy while it gives glory to thy Lord and Master, shall give rapid victory unto thee. He is a chained enemy; this leviathan hath a bit between his jaws and a hook in his nose. He may vex thee for awhile, but thou shalt be "more than conqueror through him that loved thee;" therefore fear not. That is the lesson from the text to the child of God.

One other word to the believer of God. Should not this contemplation make us say, "Let us worship him who hath the keys of hell and death: let us come into his presence with thanksgiving, and show ourselves glad in him with songs"? Preaching is not the great end of the Sabbath-day; listening to sermons is not the great aim of Sundays. It is a means; what is the end? Why, the end, so far as we can attain it on earth, is for us to glorify God in service, and especially in the singing of his praises. Worship rendered to God in prayer and praise is the true fruit of the Sabbath, and I am afraid we are behind in this. I wish that when believers come together they would oftener render unto Christ the coronals of their hymns, to crown him Lord of all. His enemies miss no opportunity to spite him; those that hate his gospel are zealous to bring shame upon it. Oh, miss no opportunities to extol him with your praises, and to honour him with the holiness of your lives and the zeal of your service. Is he King over heaven, and death, and hell? Then shall he be King over the triple territory of my spirit, soul, and

body; and I will make all my powers and passions yield him praise.

To conclude. If to the righteous the lesson from all this is, "Fear not," methinks the lesson to the ungodly is, "Fear and tremble." Christ hath the keys of death. Then you may die this moment: you may die ere you reach your homes. You have not the key of death, you cannot therefore prolong your life; but Christ hath it, and he can end the times of his longsuffering just when he so wills it. And what would it be to some of you if the gate of death were opened for you, and you were driven through it like dumb driven cattle this very day? O man, what would become of thee, O woman what would become of thee, if now those eyes should glaze, and that pulse should stop? I beseech thee consider thy ways, and turn thee unto God, lest thou die and perish on a sudden. Remember, soul, that if thou wouldst fight it out with Christ, and be his enemy, yet thou canst not, for he is Lord, and will be Lord. Even shouldst thou fly to hell to escape him, he ruleth there. "If I make my bed in hell thou art there." "Oh," said one who had gone into the backwoods of America far away, and there met a preacher, "I thought I had escaped these Methodists, and here comes a parson worrying me even here." "Yes," said the other, "if you went to heaven you would find religion there, and if you go to hell you will, I am afraid, find preachers even there."

If religion thus follows a man, how much more does the power of God surround him! You cannot escape from the Lord of all true preachers, if you can escape from them. Wherever you may go, there shall the remembrances of his rejected love pierce you like barbed arrows. Even in hell shall the glory of his power, which you could not thrust down though you tried to do it, strike you with a deeper despair. I implore you to listen to his gospel. He that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved. This is the message he gave us when he was taken up, almost the last

word he spake ere he rose into his glory. "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." O then, yield to his gospel: believe, that is, trust implicitly in him who died on the cross of Calvary to make atonement, and now liveth to make intercession. Trust in him, and then come forth and confess your trust: be baptised in his name, confessing your sins, and acknowledging yourself to be his disciple. This is the gospel: reject it at your peril. Submit to it, I beseech you, for Christ's sake.

ELEVEN
THE EVER-LIVING CHRIST

SERMON GIVEN ON JULY 24, 1881

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 1:18

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 46

*“I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold,
I am alive for evermore, Amen.”*

REVELATION 1:18.

WE long, sometimes, to behold Christ in his glory. Certainly, it is one of our brightest hopes that we shall see him as he is. Every true believer can say, with Job, “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.” But, brethren, as we are now constituted, we are quite unfit for the vision of our Master’s glory. It was well that, when he was on earth, he veiled

himself in the form of man, for when he did uplift the veil a little, as he did on the mountain of transfiguration, the sight, though it was but a glimpse, was too much for Peter, and James, and John. They were overpowered by it, they fell asleep even upon the holy mount; and even when they were awake, they knew not what to say. And as we now are, if we could be favoured with a sight of Christ in his glory, it would be too much for us also. It was too much even for John, and we are far inferior to him; our eyes are not as clear and strong as his eyes were; yet he could not endure that wondrous vision. The grey old saint in Patmos had been familiar with his Master more years than most of us have known him; he had laid his head upon the Saviour's bosom, — a privilege accorded to none beside himself; he had stood at the cross, and seen the blood and water flow from that dear heart that loved him so well; and yet, though he was "that disciple whom Jesus loved," when even he had a sight of his glorified Master, he fell at his feet as dead. The full glory of Christ is too much for us to behold while we are here on the earth, so ask not to have it yet, dear friends. By-and-by, when you are fitted for it, and Christ has prepared a place for you, his prayer shall be fulfilled in your happy experience, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me." He might say to each one of you, "Not yet, my child, not yet may you see me as I am; your eyes are not yet fit for such a sight as that."

Observe, beloved, how the Saviour comforted John when, through the excessive glory of the vision of his Lord, he swooned away, and was as one dead. First, he laid his right hand upon him; and that is where your comfort and mine must always come from, — from the hand that was crucified for us. There streams from that pierced hand a wondrous power that makes the weakest strong. A touch of it proves how near Christ

is to us. We know, when he touches us, that he is man as well as God; and the familiar touch, which brings him so consciously near our spirit, makes us glad and joyous, and we become strong again. And if the fact of his incarnation — the truth that Christ is flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone, — should not suffice to cheer us, then he adds, as he did to John, “Fear not.” The Master is saying that to each one of you who believe in him, but especially to such of you as are very faint and weak, and who feel that you are soon to die. He is drawing near to you, sisters and brothers, who are shortly to lay aside the frail tabernacle of this mortal body. The glintings and gleamings of the glory yet to be revealed overcome you; but he whispers in your ear, “Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead.” All these words are full of good cheer to spirits that faint away with expectation of the coming of the King, and to hearts that are ravished with desire for the company of the Bestbeloved.

“Fear not,” says he; and that we also may not fear, let us now look into the things here made known which ought to be a cause of strength and comfort to us. They seem to me to be three; though there are many more, there are three that strike me most. The first is, *the identity of Christ*. However glorious he may be, and his very face is as the sun when he shineth in his strength, yet he is the same Christ as when he was here on earth: “I am he that liveth, and was dead.” Those words prove to us the identity of Christ. The next ground of sweet comfort, whenever we think of Christ in his glory, is *the perfection of his work*, which is implied in the expression, “and was dead.” He has nothing to do with death now; so far as he is personally concerned, that is all over. You see that the words are in the past tense: “I am he that liveth, *and was dead*” And then, thirdly, the great source of heart-cheer to every believer, as he trembles in the presence of his glorified Master, is the fact of

Christ's eternal existence: "I am alive for evermore." He will never again be the dead Christ of Calvary: "I am alive for evermore, Amen."

I. Let us begin, then, with the first great truth that I mentioned, — and I must necessarily speak somewhat hurriedly on each one, — THE IDENTITY OF OUR BLESSED MASTER should greatly comfort us when we think of his glory.

Christ in heaven is the same as he was here. A great change has passed over him; but not a change as to his identity or his nature, — and especially not a change as to his heart of love to us, for he is "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." — absolutely the same. He who now maketh all heaven bright with his presence is the selfsame Christ who was born at Bethlehem, trod the waves of Galilee's storm-tossed lake, hung upon the cross, was wrapped in the cerements of death, and laid in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathæa. That same Jesus has risen from the dead, and is now sitting at the right hand of God, reigning over all worlds. I want specially to bring before you this one thought, that while Christ was here, during the forty days after his resurrection, he was manifestly the same Jesus that he had been during his earthly life. We will not suppose, we cannot imagine, that any change has taken place in him since then. The forty days of his glory on earth were a fair specimen of what he now is, and he was then the selfsame Jesus that the disciples had known before he was crucified.

There were certain points about him in which he made it quite clear that he was the same; the first was, *his tenderness*. He was always meek and lowly, gentle and kind; and he was just the same after he rose from the dead. Mark tells us that, "when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils." There is a fine touch of tenderness in that

mention of the seven devils in connection with Christ's appearance to Mary Magdalene. She was one who loved him much; she had been one of the last to watch by the sepulchre, and now she was to be the first to meet her Lord after he had risen from the dead. It was just like Christ to manifest himself first to her; to find out one of the weakest of his followers, one of those who loved him most, and one for whom he had already done the most.

Then, it was just like him to send his angel with this message to the women, "Go your way, tell his disciples," — the very men who had all forsaken him, and fled, the cowards who had deserted him in his hour of greatest need, — "tell his disciples" — and then follows that tender, Christlike touch, — "tell his disciples *and Peter*" — poor, wilful Peter, who said that he would die rather than deny his Lord, yet he did deny him with oaths and curses; yet Christ sent him a special personal message, "tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you." I am quite sure that this is the same Christ who said to Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."

Then, further on, dear brethren, notice Christ's tenderness to Thomas. Even after Christ had risen from the grave a whole week, Thomas was still unbelieving. He had said that he would not believe that his Lord had risen unless he could see in his hands the print of the nails, and put his finger into the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into the wound in Christ's side. On the second Sabbath, the Master came again to his disciples, and after saying to them, "Peace be unto you," he spoke to Thomas no word of anger, but simply said, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing."

There were, necessarily, some rebukes during that memorable period, for love must rebuke that which is not right; but those rebukes were like the reproof of which David said, "It shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head." They were just such rebukes as always come from Jesus, and only from Jesus; so we are sure it was the selfsame man who had both died and risen again.

And if another instance is needed to complete and crown the evidence, look at our Lord when he invited the disciples to eat fish with him by the lake, and then afterwards said to Peter, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" Thrice he repeated the question, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" and then lie commissioned him to feed his lambs and act as under-shepherd to his sheep. That was exactly like Christ; there was no counterfeit about such an action as that. He might there and then have said, "I am he that liveth, and was dead;" the disciples would have recognized the tones of his voice, the manner of his speech, and the spirit of his rebuke. Everything about it was so tender that it could not have been imitated, and we say at once, as John said to Peter, "It is the Lord." We cry, like Thomas, "My Lord and my God."

A second characteristic which, in connection with other things, proves the identity of Christ, is *his energy*. If Christ, after the resurrection, had been very slow, dull, heavy, lethargic, we should have said, "This is not he who was eaten up with the zeal of God's house; this is not the Christ who was clad with zeal as with a cloak." But on that day of our Lord's resurrection, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, then to Simon Peter; then, toward evening, he joined the two disciples going to Emmaus, and after he had revealed himself to them, they could scarcely reach Jerusalem before he was there in the midst of the eleven saying, "Peace be unto you." We have not a complete record of all that transpired during those forty days;

but we have sufficient to show us that our Lord was busy, here and there, showing himself, sometimes to little groups of two or three, and at one time to as many as five hundred brethren at once; and we can see that his never-tiring energy was steadily maintained through those days of his glory-life while yet he tabernacled here below.

Another point, too, is specially noticeable in the records of those forty days; and that is, *the constant Scripturalness of the blessed Master's talk*. You know that, in his day, even the religious people did not quote Scripture as he did. The Rabbis said, "Rabbi Yohannin has said," or "Rabbi Simeon has said," or "Rabbi Levi has said so-and-so and so-and-so." But Christ quoted nothing from the Rabbis. On the way to Emmaus, "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." It was always his custom so to do; and, often, he seemed to go out of his way to do or say something "that the Scripture might be fulfilled." He was always careful that, by some act or word of his, he might fulfil a prophecy which, perhaps, we never should have understood if he had not fulfilled it. So, after he had risen from the dead, if he had not been a Bible-loving Christ, we might have questioned whether he was the same Christ. I have reminded you what he said to the two disciples going to Emmaus; and when he was back at Jerusalem among the eleven, he said to them, "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day." His constant reference to the Word, his manifest delight in quoting it, the Scripturalness of his whole conversation, — all this is

clear and convincing evidence that he was the same Christ who, all his life, from the temptation in the wilderness to his death on the cross, constantly quoted the Scriptures. There was no other such teacher, in his day, who continually drew his instruction from the written Word; he was the one lone man who was mighty in the Scriptures, and who perpetually quoted them in his prelections; and as he continued to do so after his resurrection, this was another proof of his identity; he was the selfsame Christ, depend upon it.

There was another trait in his character which must not be forgotten; that is, *his love for the souls of men*. Does that come out after his resurrection? Ay, it does; not only in the incidents to which I have referred, but also in his declaration “that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” I can see a great deal in those three words, “beginning at Jerusalem.” Depend upon it, they were spoken by the man who wept over Jerusalem, and who cried, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!” “Give them one more opportunity of coming to me,” says he, “preach repentance and remission of sins, in my name, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” That is the man, I am sure, of whom it is written, “Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him.” The Pharisees and scribes said of him, “This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them;” that is why he said to his apostles, “Begin with the greatest sinners first: ‘beginning at Jerusalem.’” I know it is he, it must be the Christ himself; for, ere he died, he prayed for his murderers, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do;” and having risen from the dead, it was for those very murderers that he gave his commission of grace and mercy. His

care for men, and for the very worst of them; and his love for souls, and for those that were most of all in need of his pity and forgiveness; prove that he was the same Christ who “was moved with compassion on the multitudes, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.”

One other thing I may note, for it helps to prove the identity of Christ; that is; *his mention of the Spirit*; for, in those times, there were none but Christ who preached about the Spirit of God. I greatly fear that there are not very many who do so now. Oh, how the Spirit of God is neglected in many sermons! I heard of one preacher, of whom it was said that people who listened to him did not know whether there was any Holy Ghost; they had not heard of him for so long that they thought surely he must have ceased to operate. But our Lord continually mentioned the Spirit. In that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)” In that blessed chapter, where he tells us about the Comforter whom the Father would send to us in his name, he showed that he was himself clothed with the Spirit, and he spake much of the Spirit. Now see how he spoke after he had risen from the dead; could anything be plainer than this: “Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high”? In his last words to his disciples, there is always this reference and deference to the Spirit, this witness to the necessity of his operations, this warning to his followers that they can do nothing without him, that they cannot preach the gospel successfully except the Spirit of God be with them. That is the

selfsame Christ upon whom the Spirit rested without measure, I am sure it is he; and when he says, "I am he that liveth, — and was dead," all the tokens of the forty days go to prove the identity of the risen Christ with the Christ who died upon the cross.

Let us dwell on that thought for just a minute ere we pass on. Christ in glory is none other than he was here. No man ever loses anything by going to heaven; an ordinary man gains much by going there, so I am sure my Lord is none the worse for entering into his glory; he is none the less tender, none the less zealous, none the less mighty to save; but just as we might have been glad to run to him when he was here, so may we gladly go to him now, for he is just the same.

II. Now I must speak very briefly upon the second head, although I might enlarge upon it to almost any extent, for it relates to THE FINISHED WORK OF CHRIST.

When our Lord used to John the words "was dead," and applied them to himself, he meant that *he had performed the crucial part of the atonement*. The very central point of the atonement was death; there was no way of making atonement for sin except by the shedding of the precious blood of Jesus, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. There must be life to atone for sin, and that life sacrificed; and, therefore, Christ "was dead." It was no dream, no delusion, no sleep, no swoon, no coma; he "was dead." Though it was not possible for our blessed and glorious Saviour to be holden by the bands of death, yet he "was dead."

This meant, further, that *Christ's work was ended, and done with*. There are some people who talk about presenting the perpetual sacrifice of the mass. There is, perhaps, no grosser blasphemy under heaven than the idea that we can offer up the body and blood of Christ again. "Once for all" Jesus died, but he is not a dead Christ now. Pictures of Christ dead, and crucifixes, and all things of that sort, may to some extent represent

what he was, but they do not represent what he is. I should not care to have, hanging up in my house, the picture of a dead friend, representing him as he looked when he was dead, especially if he had been raised to life again. I would rather wait for his portrait till I could get one of him alive, for the picture of a dead man is not the man's likeness at all. I saw in a friend's house, the other day, the likeness of a minister, and I said, "Oh, dear, how ghastly lie looks!" The gentleman replied, "I am told that the photograph was taken after he was dead." "Well, then," I said, "put it away at once, pray put it away. That is not the likeness of the man at all, for the man was gone before it was taken." So, dear friends, do not feel any kind of reverence for representations of the dead Christ, because he is not dead, and we ought not to think of him as dead. I have seen, and some of you must also have seen, in Roman Catholic countries, figures of the Saviour on the cross, till you have grown sick of the sight, and you have said, "If there is anything that could drive me away from being a Christian, it is these perfectly hideous caricatures of Christ that some people stick up at every corner of the road." Christ is not dead. He "was dead." It is in the past tense, never forget that; but he is not dead now. "He is not here: for he is risen, as he said;" and our trust is not in a dead Christ, but in the ever-living Christ who is still able "to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

Recollect, also, dear friends, that, in the enterprise upon which our Lord's heart was set, — the enterprise of saving men, — *the love which led him to die is living love*. He has proved, once for all, and beyond all doubt, how much he loves his people: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." He has done that, and therefore he has proved his love to guilty men in a way that is perfectly indisputable; and —

*“Now though he reigns exalted high,
His love is still as great.”*

And remember, next, that *the purpose of Christ in dying will certainly be accomplished*, now that he has laid down his life for his people, and taken it up again. I am not one of those who think that the result of Christ's death ever hung in jeopardy for a single moment. I believe that all he intended to do by his death will be done; and that there is not one soul, for whom he stood as Substitute, that shall ever be lost. He has paid the debt for all his elect, and they shall never be charged with their debts again; they are gone, and gone for ever. If the Son of God has actually laid down his life to achieve a certain purpose, I cannot suppose that he will be prevented from achieving it. I can imagine myself living and dying for a certain end, and yet being foiled, for I am but a man; but I am not capable of such blasphemy as would be involved in believing that the Son of God could ever be born and live for a certain set purpose, and die to carry out that purpose, and yet not accomplish it. “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.” He “was dead,” and he has therefore put forth all his strength for the accomplishment of the end he had in view, and that end will certainly be achieved.

And recollect, too, that *the merit of his death abides*. He “was dead;” but all the merit of that death is just as efficacious to-day as though he had only died to-day. Imagine for a moment that this was the morning of Christ's resurrection, that I stood here to tell you that I had gone with Mary Magdalene, and seen his empty tomb, and that he had spoken to me as he did to her. With what freshness and power would I talk to you about those dear wounds of his, and about the meaning of his death, and the sacrifice which he had offered. Well, now, although more than eighteen hundred years have passed since his resurrection, it is

just as fresh to God, and just as acceptable to God as ever it was. Still does he approve of the atoning sacrifice of the Well-beloved, and the merit of it comes up perpetually before him like the odour of sweet incense.

This is a glad, a joyous theme, over which I would fain linger, — to think that Christ's work is all done, all finished, all complete; there is nothing more needing to be done for his people's redemption; as he himself said, ere he gave up the ghost, "It is finished." That expression "was dead" comes to me like the sound of a peal of bells tolling the death of death, and ringing in the jubilee of all who believe in Jesus. He "was dead," but he is dead no longer; he lives now, and he is "alive for evermore."

III. With that third word of comfort I am going to conclude. THE ETERNAL EXISTENCE OF CHRIST should always comfort us whenever we think of his glory. He that was dead is "alive for evermore."

Here, then, ye warriors of the cross, is *unique leadership*. Never did men before have such a leader as this one, who has proved his ardour for the accomplishment of his purpose by dying to achieve it, and who now lives to see that purpose fully accomplished. When Mohammed was alive, — false prophet though he was, — he inspired his followers with extraordinary enthusiasm when he snatched up a handful of dust from the road, and flung it in the faces of his adversaries, crying, as he did so, "Let them be blinded." His followers believed that a miracle would really be wrought, and they therefore rushed upon their enemies, and swept them away like chaff before the whirlwind. Yet now that Mohammed is dead and gone, his religion wanes, and must in time expire; but our Master is not dead, our Leader is alive. He still rides at the head of the army of the cross, and calls us to battle for truth and right. The ungodly hear him not; but as many as believe in him still hear

his clear voice ringing out the command, "Onward, hosts of God! Forward to the fight! 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,' until I come."

We take comfort from the fact that we are led by the living Christ. When the Cid, Rodrigo Diaz, had been slam in battle, those who had been accustomed to dread his mighty sword did not for a time know that he was dead. His followers mounted the dead Cid on horseback; and the very sight of him, though it was only his corpse that they saw, made his adversaries fly before him. We set no dead Christ in the forefront of our army; it is the living Christ who marches before us, and therefore we are confident of victory, for never was host so led as by him who can say, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore."

Next, here is *a singular guarantee*. He, who was dead, is now alive; then, brethren, he will carry on his work. If, when he died, he had never risen again, but had left his cause in our puny hands, it would soon have failed. But he has risen; and "he shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law." His kingdom shall extend to the utmost bounds of the earth; "they that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust." Be ye sure of this, beloved, that there is a guarantee of victory in the fact that Christ is still alive. In these dreary times in which we live, men tell us that Christianity is a failure, that the gospel is a delusion, and I do not know what is not going to happen. Yes, yes; but there is one very important thing which they omit to mention. He lives, *he lives*, HE LIVES, who can never be crucified again. The Lord hath set him as King upon his holy hill of Zion, and though "the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that

sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision;" for the Lord reigneth, and he shall reign for ever and ever, Hallelujah.

In addition to this unique leadership, and this singular guarantee of success, we have also here *special encouragement to sinners*. I verily believe that, if my Master were here to-night in bodily presence, there are some of you, who have been seeking him, who would come, and fall at his feet; ay, you would be only too glad if you might wash his feet with your tears, and wipe them with the hairs of your head. Well, he is living, and he is here, though you cannot see him or touch him; and you may come to him. You have not to travel any distance with weary feet in order to get to him; your minds can get to him at once. Forget your eyes awhile; they are poor dim things that hinder true sight. That may seem to be a strange description of our eyes, but it is true; and when we have got rid of them, we shall see much better than we do now. But, oh! for once, believe without seeing; believe that Jesus Christ is near you, and ask him to save you. Come to him, and by faith touch the hem of his garment just as if he were here corporeally. Cry to him, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me;" for he will hear you, and grant your request. Say, "Lord, that I might receive my sight;" and he will spiritually open your eyes now even as, in the days of his flesh, he literally opened the eyes of blind men. You may well come to him for he is just the same Jesus as he used to be when he said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He lives, *he lives*, HE LIVES; therefore, go to your homes, and find him there; go to your bedrooms, and tell him that you need him, cast yourselves down before him in humble penitence and true faith, and he will save you, he will bless you, because he still liveth to make intercession for all that come unto God by him.

Now I close by noticing that there is something in this text

which has *a solemn warning* in it; for Christ lives, and as he lives, woe be to those who persecute his people! Woe be to those who make a jest of him, or trifle with his truth, neglect his gospel, and put off seeking their own salvation until to-morrow! O my dear hearers, if Christ were dead, we ought to respect his memory; but since he lives, remember that he takes cognizance of every insult to his cause; and though he is ever ready to forgive, yet, if your ears refuse the invitations of his grace, if you hold out against his warnings and entreaties, he will surely come again, and when he cometh, there will be upon that face of love something which you will dread more than all the lightnings and thunders of the last tremendous day. What, think you, is the most dreadful thing in the day of judgment? The fairest sight that e'er was seen by mortal men, — the face that causes the holy angels to sing, and that makes heaven for the saints; — the face of Christ, — love and justice, gentleness and truth, Godhead and manhood blended in that matchless face; and while his saints clap their hands with jubilant exultation at the sight of him, the most awful thing in all the world to the ungodly will be that face; for, as they look into it, and see the lines of suffering, and of suffering despised, — and see the marks of love, and of love rejected, — of majesty, and of majesty that has been insulted, — as they look there, they will cry to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?” O sirs, that must be a dreadful thing which turns the best thing in heaven into an object of the utmost terror! So, give up that sin of yours, I pray you. Give up that unbelief. Give up that self-righteousness. Give up everything that will, as it were, curdle the very love of Christ till even his great love shall turn to jealousy, for fiercer than the lion with his prey is love when once it is transformed into wrath. “Kiss the Son, lest he be

angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him," for their confidence is in him who still says, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore." God bless you, for his dear name's sake! Amen.

REVELATION 2

TWELVE
LABOURING AND NOT FAINTING

SERMON GIVEN ON SEPTEMBER 8, 1872

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 2:3

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 18

*“For my name’s sake thou hast laboured and
hast not fainted.”*

REVELATION 2:3

THE Lord Jesus Christ never removes his eyes from his Church. He notes everything that concerns her, observing not merely the life of her members but their soul’s health, and not merely their health, but the way in which they spend their spiritual strength. He knows their works, he observes their charity, their patience, their zeal, for his name’s sake. Seven times in his words to the churches, he says, “I know thy works.” This should make us live with great care, for albeit the whole world is under the eye of God, yet of his Church it is true, “upon one stone

there shall be seven eyes." The full perfection of omniscience exerts itself upon the Lord's chosen people. The husbandman has an eye to all his estate, but his chief care is his own family; and, even so, while the Great Husbandman of all creation observes all his works, he chiefly looks upon his own household. "The eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy."

Our Lord Jesus, it appears from the text and its connection, notices what it is that his church cannot bear, and he is very glad when she cannot endure false doctrine, or unholy living; he would have her never to endure these, but to purge herself from them with all strictness. But he notes also with joy what she can bear,—toilsome labour, abundant self-denial, reproach for his sake, and persecution, and suffering, even unto blood. In this he sees her love made manifest, and his delight is in her. It appears that our Lord especially fixes his eye upon the labours of the church. What is the church allowed to be on earth for, but that she should labour for her Lord? If there were nothing to be done in this world, there would be no reason for her lingering here below. She would be transported to the better land, if there were not great ends to be accomplished by her tarrying here. She is put here because the world wants her, and because God's glory is to be revealed through her. She is to be salt to a society which else were putrid, light to a people who else would sit in darkness. Consequently a church which does not labour misses the chief end of its being; it is a plant that beareth no flower, a vine branch that yieldeth no cluster.

Christ observes the labour of his church, and he has especial delight in it when it is continuous, so that he can give to her the double commendation of our text, "Thou hast laboured and hast not fainted." Oh! that we might receive this commendation from our Master's lips at the last. May he, whose blood and righteousness are our only hope of salvation, see in us

abounding evidences of the grateful love which he so well deserves at our hands. We shall this morning make persevering service our theme.

I. First I would call your attention to the text itself, noticing **THE POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE GOOD** here combined. “Thou hast laboured” — there is something positive. “Thou hast not fainted” — there is a negative which helps to make the positive more positively excellent.

“Thou hast laboured.” We will not consider the original, but we will take the word of our version. “Thou hast laboured.” Now, to labour signifies working with the putting forth of much strength: it is work with an emphasis. It means hard work, intense exertion, vigorous action. Men may work, but yet not labour, and I fear there are many who claim to be working men who do not often trouble themselves with anything approaching to “labour.” There are also working Christians who do not approach to labouring; yet a lifetime of such work as theirs would not exhaust a butterfly. Now, when a man works for Christ he should work with all his might. Surely we should not offer less love under the gospel, than was required under the law, and you know the law speaketh on this wise,—“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.” Surely Jesus Christ deserves all that, and when we labour for him it should not be with the careless indifference of slaves, but with the ardour of lovers, the devotion of enthusiasts. If any master is to be served badly, let it not be our Master who is in heaven: we owe him too much to wish to be eye servants towards him. If anywhere a dilatory servant may be excused, certainly it cannot be in the service of him who redeemed us with his most precious blood. A church ought, therefore, not merely to be a working church, but a great deal more; it should be a church working to its highest pitch, a labouring church. If I

may use the figure, we ought to employ every particle of our steam power; we should drive the engine at high pressure; we have no force that can be allowed to escape in waste. We should be not simply walking to heaven, but running the heavenly race, and running it with diligence and eagerness.

When a man truly labours it takes a good deal out of him, labouring therefore implies self-denial. In labour the man's strength is brought forth and expended. See how the hot sweat stands upon his brow, how it pours from him as he continues to exert himself. He has to deny himself, for he would like to be at rest. He sees his comrade, perhaps, lounging against yonder pillar, or stretching himself at ease upon the greensward; he cannot do that and labour,— he knows he cannot; he lays aside his ease and comfort for the sake of what he has to do. So would the church if she were what she should be, she would deny herself and take up the cross of high-pressure service. She would toil without cessation, and give without stint. An energy far beyond anything usual in Christendom would be common in the church if she were in a right state of heart. Alas! I fear the bulk of professors are not earnest enough to preserve their professions from ridicule. I noticed, the other day, a remark which struck me. Speaking of a certain congregation, the writer said he believed there were a hundred persons in it who were worth not less than live thousand pounds a-year each, and then he mentioned the sum that was given for the maintenance of the work of God, and he added, "If any ordinary person who was not a Christian, went in there and heard them sing—

*"And if I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call,
I love my God with zeal so great,
That I would give him all," —*

he would say to himself, "I was at the theatre on Saturday night, and saw a farce, but if I want a screaming one I must come here on a Sunday." Indeed, I thought the remark to be sadly true. When I see how much there is of available strength both in worldly substance, in mental vigour, and in other forms in the church, which is never used, I dare hardly say that any church now upon earth really labours for Christ. A little of your spare strength is given to Jesus, and then ye think ye have done well. He is put off with odds and ends, the cheese parings and the potatoe peelings of the church. I ask you, does he get much more? What are the gifts of most? Do they give as much as would keep the lowest menial in their kitchens? It was not so in early times. Then men were Christians all over and altogether, and served Christ first, Christ last, Christ midst, and Christ without end; but now it is enough if we gloss over life with a little varnish of holy talk and pious profession. Would God these eyes might live to see a church that really laboured, putting forth all its strength with all its might, using all the force in its possession for the propagation of the gospel of the Lord and the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom.

But labour implies not merely the strong effort I have tried to depict, but a continuance of it, for a man might take up a workman's tool and for a few minutes make a mighty show of effort, and yet be no labourer, unless he kept on working till his task was done. If a few minutes sufficed him, and he said "I have had practical experience of what labour is, and I rather think it does not agree with me;" and if, therefore, he should lay down his tool and go back to his gentlemanly ease, he would be no labourer. He merely plays at labour, that is all. So have we known too many whose service for God has been occasional; fits and starts of effort they have, but they are soon over; their spasmodic zeal is to-day so hot as to be well nigh fanatical, and tomorrow it will be succeeded by an indifference far more

astounding. If the church is said to labour, it means that she puts forth all her strength as a regular thing. Like the sun and moon she continues in her orbit of duty. She does not flash and foam for a brief interval like a torrent, but she flows on steadily and continually like a river. She keeps at her life-work; with all her might she continues in well-doing, and is not weary. There is the positive good.

The negative, as I have said, crowns the positive, "And hast not fainted." Now, there are different degrees of fainting. Some may be said to faint comparatively when they flag in exertion. They drop from running to walking, from diligence to indolence. They did run well; what did hinder them? They flag. Many continue to do as much as ever they did outwardly, yet their heart is not in it, and so they faint. Their service is the same to the eye of man, but not the same to the eye of God. They act as mere officials; their work is done mechanically; they go through the routine, but they put forth no energy, no life power; there is no anointing of the Holy Ghost in them. There is fruit, but it resembles the berries of a sunless summer; it is tasteless, insipid, and all but worthless.

Some flag by growing weak in all they do. They do put forth such force as they have, but they are essentially feeble. They preach their best, but their best is wine mixed with water. They teach in the school, and what they teach is the truth, and they deliver it with some degree of earnestness; but they have lost the power with which to influence the heart; ears they can weary, but consciences they cannot stir. They are vigorously feeble, vehemently weak. They have got away from God, the source of all spiritual strength, and therefore their locks are shorn, and though like Samson they shake themselves, they shake themselves in vain. The power of God has departed from them, and, though they may not know it, Ichabod is written upon their works.

Too many go further than this; they renounce all or a large part of the Christian work they were accustomed to do. Content with the efforts of other days they surrender to the sluggard's vice. They faint, that is, they give up the work altogether; the soldier grounds his arms, the workman puts by his tools; they count their day's work to be done before the day is done, and cry for their wages before the pay day has arrived. It is sad that there should be so many in the church of this kind.

And some go even further than that, for after retiring from labour themselves, they cease to have any care about the Lord's work. They grow indifferent; they even become critical and censorious towards those who are zealously occupied; and whether Christ's kingdom grows or declines appears to be little or nothing to them. They wear the Christian name still, but they have fainted. They are like persons in a swoon who have become unconscious of all around. They want assistance from others, and can give no help in return. They are a draft upon the church's resources, instead of an addition to her strength. For all usefulness they might as well be dead; only as a tax upon the energy of the church can they be said to be alive.

Happy are they who are preserved from fainting in any one of these degrees. God grant especially that we may never come to that last, lest it should be said of us that we had a name to live, and were dead. But, brothers and sisters, members of Christ's church, may this be said of us through a long course of years: "They laboured and fainted not." When our hair is white with the snows of many winters, may it be said truly by the dear lips of him who intercedes for us in heaven, "Thou hast laboured and hast not fainted." When we lie in our last narrow bed, may this be the encomium which our spirit shall hear before the throne of God, "Thou hast laboured and hast not fainted." May this be such a sentence as an honest affection may dare to write upon our tombs. Have we begun to faint

already? If we are yet in our youth let us corn to faint so soon. If we are yet in the prime of our days, let us call shame upon ourselves for fainting ere yet the sun shines. Or, are we beginning to faint now that we are growing grey? Wherefore should we faint now when the day is almost over, and the shadows are drawn out? Brother, call shame upon thyself, if thou wouldst faint in thy last evening hours when glory is at thy door and the crown of immortality is all but upon thy brow. Let us be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, so that this text may be our own at the last: "Thou hast laboured for my name's sake, and hast not fainted."

II. Now we pass on to a second part of our discourse, and that is, to dwell upon EXCUSES FOR FAINTING. Fainting has become so common in the Church of God that various apologies have been made for it, and they are constantly being repeated; for when a sin is frequent, excuses for it are multiplied until men cease to blush, and think that they have done no ill whatever.

There are some who faint in the work of God because the work itself has proved very tedious to them. When they first undertook it and the novelty was upon it they did not tire, but now the freshness is gone, and they have come into the real wear and tear of it, they do not enjoy it quite so much as they thought they should. They hoped for an office in which the chief labour should be to gather lilies, or lie upon beds of roses. The service of the Crucified is far less romantic, and far more laborious. Dear friends, if any of you think that the road of Christian service is all macadamised and rolled with a steam roller, you have made a very great mistake. There is no royal road to eminence in anything, it is always uphill work and rough climbing; and certainly there is no such road in the service of God. Never was there a truer sentence than that we sung just now.

*"True, 'tis a straight and thorny road,
And mortal spirits tire and faint."*

Friends were debating the other day concerning the work of the ministry, the ease or the labour of it, and I reminded one of them of that saying of Baxter, "God have mercy upon the man who finds the ministry of the gospel to be easy work, for he will have need of all God's mercy indeed when he renders up his account at the last great day." I cannot conceive of a more atrocious offender against humanity and against God than the man who, having souls committed to his trust, finds it an easy thing to take care of them and watch for their salvation. Sirs, the ministry is a matter which wears the brain and strains the heart, and drains out the life of a man if he attends to it as he should. If God were served by any of us as he should be, I question whether we should not grow old before our time through labour and anguish, even as did that great lover of souls, Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep. Soul-winning is a work that might fill an angel's heart,— did fill a Saviour's hands. Any service for God, if it be done at all, should be hard work. If you want to be feather-bed soldiers go and enlist somewhere else, but Christ's soldiers must fight, and they will find the battle rough and stern. We, of the church militant, are engaged in no mimic manoeuvres and grand parades; our life is real and earnest; our battle, though not with flesh and blood, is with spiritual wickedness in high places, and it involves hard blows and keen anguish. You must look for real fighting if you become a soldier of Christ, and oh, sir, if the excuse for fainting be that the work is toilsome, that it is too much a drag upon you, why did you begin it? You ought to have known this at the first. You should have counted the cost. But, ah, let me add, the work was not toilsome when your heart was loving, neither would it now be so hard if your soul were right with God. This is but an

unworthy excuse. Ardent spirits love difficulties; fervent love delights in making sacrifices; they would not wish to swim for ever in smooth seas of pleasure; they know that manhood's truest glory lies in contending with and overcoming that which is hard. Give to the child the easy task, but let the man have something worth the doing to perform. Instead of shrinking because the work is tedious, we ought to gird up our loins and push on the enterprise with all the greater three.

Another apology is pretty frequently heard. "But I have been so long at it now. I have been a tract distributor, I have been a city missionary, I have been an evangelist, or I have been a Bible woman, or I have been a Sunday-school teacher now twenty or thirty years, and I think it is time to retire." Say you so, my comrades? The sun has been shining now a great many thousand years, but I have not heard that he intends retiring from the business yet. God has given to us fruitful seasons, and I have not heard that he intends to cease to bless our husbandry; every day we drink from the river of his mercy, and we have had no intimation yet that that river has ceased to flow, and that God intends to cut off the supplies. Why, then, should any one of us dream of staying his hand? What is a lifetime at its utmost length for the service of God? Suppose a man could spend seventy clear years in unflagging exertion in the service of his Master, what would it be after all? But now half our time must go in sleep, and in the necessary refreshment of the body; next, a very large proportion must be taken off for the business of the world, and then what is left? Why we can only give our Master a few hours in the week, the most of us, and yet you talk about having served him so long. Dear Master, put thy hand upon our lips next time we would use such words, and never permit us to insult the sovereignty of thy dear love by making such an excuse for our sluggishness.

Other excuses, however, will be sure to come, and amongst

them this, that we have been disappointed up till now in the success of what we have attempted. We have sown, but the most of the seed has fallen upon the wayside, or upon the rocks; and where it did spring up, we have not gained anything like a hundred-fold increase. We thought that in our class we should have had all the girls or all the boys converted almost immediately; and when we went into the village to preach, we concluded everybody would come to hear us, and that hearing us, they would be converted, and a church would be formed speedily. We dreamed that when we visited a district in the crowded city, we should be able, very soon, so to reform the people, that the public houses would grow fewer, and the Sabbath would be better kept, and I do not know what beside: very little of this fair vision has been realised; we have not succeeded as we desired. And what is very perplexing to us is the fact that we know of somebody who has succeeded where we have failed; a person who does not appear to have all the gifts we have, and all the capacities we have, whose sphere was evidently quite as difficult as ours, and yet he has prospered and we have not, and therefore we conclude that we would do well to cease our working. If we were in our right minds, and did not want an excuse for being sluggards, we should not reason thus, but should argue to a conclusion of a diametrically opposite nature. He who has succeeded so well might, perhaps, have an excuse for going home and saying, "Master, my work is done," but he who has done so very little should continue at his work till he can show some sort of result for his efforts. He should say, "I will stick to this till I do succeed, or till I can say, 'If I have not succeeded it was no fault of mine: I did what my Master bade me, I called upon him for help in it, and I went to work in his way with faith in him, and if I have not prospered, I have done what I could.'" I remember hearing a certain young preacher exclaim after he had heard an older divine, who had

preached with some power, "There now, I shall never be able to preach again after this, I shall feel quite ashamed to go into the pulpit with my poor sermons!" I could not help remarking that the effect ought to be the other way. If this man had done so well, it only shows what God can enable me to do, and I will go to God and ask him to help me; if this brother is so useful in the church, I will bless God that he is a better man than I am, and if God pleases to give me a gleam of success occasionally, I will thank him even if I am not able to bear so much success as my fellow-servant. We must not give up the war because we have not conquered yet, but fight on till we can seize the victory. Let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.

Another set of excuses I must mention. They are little, pettish, pitiful, proud excuses, but they are very common. Here is one. "I shall leave the work for I am sure I am not appreciated as I ought to be." You do not exactly use these words, but that is your feeling. I am only photographing your thoughts. You began to serve God very enthusiastically, and you thought the minister ought to have said, "I am thankful that God has sent such a very zealous young man into our church": but he has not made any such remark. You have gone on for some time working among the poor, but the good people around you have not been heard to say, "Have you heard of so and so? she is such a remarkably useful woman, quite a godsend among us, an example to us all." You feel hurt that you are not admired, vexed that you are not highly esteemed. Now, I will not waste words in exposing this feeling, but I will at once ask you to look at it, and say if you don't think it is the meanest and most miserable thing you have ever set your eyes upon. Do you mean to give way to such pettishness and silliness? If so, I have done with you, for you will never do any good in this world. The slave of such a mean feeling is incapable of being free.

“Ah,” cries another, “my complaint is more reasonable, for I am discouraged because no one aids me in my work. I should not mind their not appreciating me, but they have not assisted me, though I have needed much help. I have kept on under great pressure, and where I thought I should surely find sympathisers and helpers, I have met with the cold shoulder and unkind remarks.” Oh, my brother, my brother, does your life after all depend upon the breath of other men’s nostrils? Has it come to this, that you cannot live upon the approbation of your Master unless you gain also the smile of your fellowservants? Does it mean this, that you will not do your duty because other people are negligent of theirs? It seems to me if others will not aid me I must put my shoulder to the wheel and do the work myself by the help of God. If the toil be unshared the honour will be undivided. To tread the winepress alone makes us more like our Lord. Therefore, let us labour on in the name of the Lord, whose support is far better than the help of kings or princes.

Another says, “I have no patience with these frivolous excuses, but mine is a solid one. I must leave my work, for I am so much opposed in it.” Granted that you are opposed, why should you run away? Overcome the opposition, dear brother; the more of it to be overcome, the more grace you want, and the more honour you may gain. Suppose a troop should come against you, is it not said of Gad, “A troop shall overcome him, but he shall overcome at the last”? Would you be crowned without a conflict, and made a victor without fighting? Of one of old it is said, that he broke through a troop and leaped over a wall through his God. Why should not you do the same? “But my wall is so high,” say you, “I cannot leap over it.” Is it an iron wall or a granite wall? Then, if God tells you to leap, leap right at it. He will either bear you over it, or else its solid substance will dissolve into impalpable vapour and vanish quite away.

You only want courage. Go in this thy might, for thou shalt thresh the mountains, and the wind shall winnow them and carry them away.

“But I am so incompetent and feel so weak,” says one, “in fact, the further I go the weaker I get!” You are progressing admirably, dear brother, and when you become still weaker you will succeed. Gideon could not win the battle because he had too many soldiers; the fainthearted had to be sent away, but still there were too many troops remaining, and when the whole army was reduced to three hundred, and they had no weapons but earthen vessels and trumpets, then it was that the Midianites were smitten. When we are weak then are we strong. Oh, brother, renounce this excuse and labour on, fainting not. God keep thee from fainting.

III. Now, for a moment or two, I am going to mention the REAL CAUSES OF FAINTING. The first is an actual decline in spiritual strength. When a working believer suddenly becomes a loitering professor, you may gather from it that his spiritual constitution has grey hairs upon it here and there, though he knows it not. It is not, dear brother, merely that you do not do so much, it is that you are not so much; you have not the amount of life in you which you once had. And is not this a sad thing? Ought not this to be an indicator to you of spiritual sickness, and drive you at once to the Good Physician to seek for healing at his hands. There is, if you would look a little into your spirit, I am quite sure of it, a falling off in your love to Jesus. Holy work is no harder, but you do not love Christ so well. You have, in truth, no more enemies than you had, but you have forgotten your best friend. Oh, if you had been in the banqueting house with him, and his banner of love had waved over you, and you had been made to drink of the spiced wine of his pomegranate in sweet communion with his blessed person, you would not have fainted, for he who is on

fire with love will burn his way through difficulties. I am afraid too there is coming over your spirit a great deal of deadness to spiritual and eternal things. You are now more moved and actuated by the things that are seen, and less by the things that are unseen. It is a very easy thing for us to get to enjoy the world, and to give our hearts up to its troubles and cares, but it needs the Spirit of God to make us sensitive to the divine touch, so that we feel eternity, so that we know the value of other men's souls, so that we put before us the great day in which actions shall be revealed, so that we estimate life aright as it will weigh in the balances of infinite justice. Oh, to be dead to these spiritual realities in any degree is a dreadful death, and to be callous to holy things is a terrible hardness. May God keep us from spiritual insensibility, and may we be tender and sensitive to the faintest motion of the Holy Spirit.

It is to be feared, also, that those who faint have lost their reliance upon divine power, at least in a degree. The man who labours for God aright never works in his own strength. He who works aright acts because he believes that God works through him; and can a man faint when he feels that? When we fight for God's truth it is not our arm but the arm of the Eternal which deals the blow. When we bear testimony to his word it is not we that speak, but God's Spirit speaks through us. Let the man of God go forth to any enterprise and hear the sound of his Master's feet behind him, and he will march to the tune of Miriam's timbrel; but let him go alone and he will moan, and murmur, and pine, and fail, and die. Confidence in God makes us strong, but by turning away from our great unseen helper, we straightway begin to faint.

Moreover, I am afraid that we forget that the Lord requires of us an unselfish dedication to his service, and that we do not serve him at all unless his glory is our chief object. When I hear of a fainting Sunday-school teacher, who gives as a reason for

fainting that he does not think the other Sunday-school teachers are as kind to him as they ought to be, I ask him whether his main object was that he should be loved of men, for if he loved his God what would it be to him how his fellowmen regarded him? When I hear a man saying, "I shall give up that post, or that service"—(of course I am not mentioning those who have justifiable reasons, and there are such cases), but when I hear of a man's retiring because he is faint-hearted, I would say to him, "You meet with difficulties;— did you not know you would meet with difficulties? You have gained no honour;— did you not serve for another motive, namely, God's glory? If you looked for ease, and content, and pleasure, and have not gained them, what wonder? You ought not to have looked for them. Oh, brother, you have made a mistake. You must get into a better state of heart before God can use you. You must feel that you would have the Lord use you just as in his infinite wisdom he sees fit to do. You should be a piece of iron on the Almighty's anvil: to be welded into a sceptre, If he chooses with you to break the potter's vessels; to be beaten into a ploughshare and plunged into the earth, if by you he means to turn up the furrows of the fallow ground; or fashioned into a spear-point, if by you he intends to smite his enemies." Whatever he wishes to make us, that we should desire to be. We know not what it is to serve God fully, until we come to perfect submission to his will.

IV. I have a little medical business to do in closing this sermon. Four sorts of persons are very common among us. There are, first, those who neither labour nor faint; next, those who faint but never labour; then, those who did labour once, but have fainted; and, fourthly, those who labour still, but are ready to faint. To each of these four I desire to administer a little medicine. Let the first come hither. There are some who neither labour nor faint. I do not mean outsiders now; those

God shall judge. I mean members of the church. Labour? No. The greatest labour they ever do is to walk from home to the meetinghouse to hear a sermon, and some of them are hardly able to keep awake during the time of hearing the discourse. They are slumbering hearers like Eutychus, and it is a great mercy God does not make an example of them as he did of that sleepy brother. We have church members who never labour, and, therefore, never faint. What should they faint about? They have never done enough to come anywhere near an approach to that state of exhaustion. They never draw the gospel coach, but they are delighted to ride on the top of it; they especially prize the box seat if they can get it. They never go into the Lord's vineyard to trim the vines, but they are very fond of eating the clusters, though, indeed, even these they will at times call sour and destitute of the flavour of the older vintages. They do nothing, nothing whatever, and, therefore, they find fault with those who do. I am very thankful that very few of this class are among us, yet there are too many. Now, I would prescribe for them a taste of the gall of bitterness. It might be beneficial to them if they had the flavour of it in their mouths, for I am very much afraid that unless they repent it will be their eternal portion. A church member who brings forth no fruit, what did the Lord say about him? He said, "Every tree that bringeth not forth fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." How would you like that, you idle church members? Every branch in the true vine that beareth not fruit he taketh away. What say you to this? How like you the look of that threat, you fruitless members? Not you that are sick and whose fruit is patience: God bless you; you are good fruit-bearing branches. Not you who are feeble in health, poor, obscure, and with little gift, who nevertheless do what you can; the Lord accepts and blesses you; he counts your mite a greater gift than the rich man's larger portion; he calls your little word that you are able to speak for Jesus truer service than

many an eloquent discourse. But I mean you who could and do not, who should and do not, who eat the fat and drink the sweet in Zion, and yet let men die and be damned while you take no care of their souls, and do not even give them a tract, or write them a letter to tell them the way to heaven, or give them a warning. Believing that you are saved yourselves, you button yourselves up and are perfectly contented to sneak into heaven alone. A pretty heaven it would be if it were full of selfish spirits like yourselves. Oh, that we may be stirred up to escape from such an unholy spirit. I loathe the very thought of living here merely to get into heaven myself; going to Christ to be washed from my own sins, and for daily mercy, and then never doing a hand's turn towards the building of his temple, but just sitting down and caring for none besides. You idlers need to have a taste of salutary bitterness. May it be kept in your mouths till it is rinsed out with a glass of repentance, and may it lead you to Jesus to ask him to save you from ail indolence and selfishness.

The next sort of persons to be dealt with are those who faint but do not labour. "Who are they?" say you. I remember one in the days of Solomon who had to go down a street upon an errand, but did not go. Dear man, he would not venture out, for there was a lion in the way. Now, truth to say, there was no lion that any man could see, but his imagination had invented the bloodthirsty animal. We know persons of the same family who would say, "Oh, do not attempt to do anything that has not been done before, it would be hazardous. Our forefathers were content to have sermons preached down back streets, where nobody could find the meeting-houses; let us keep to our obscurity." Yet men of bolder heart have pushed to the front, and mean to keep there. But hear how these cowards talk. "Do not go down that court; there are Catholics there. Do not think of going to that lodging-house; they are sure to mock at you. Do

not introduce religion to such a man, it will be of no use; he will only turn again and rend you; do not cast pearls before such swine." These are excellent wet blankets, and the stock is large. We have some of them in all congregations. What advice shall I give to them but this:— My dear brethren, just stand aside please, get out of the way, and let others come forward and serve God if you do not mean to do it yourselves. If you do not like to be so ignominiously put on one side, I would suggest to you the following medicine. Take every morning a few drops of the essential oil of "try," and you do not know what an effect it would have upon you: powers now dormant would be awakened, and things impossible would be achieved. Add to this a strong draught of the wine of "must"; necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is me unless I serve my Master; and I think you might be brought back into a tolerably healthy condition, and yet after all labour and not faint.

Our third patient is one who did labour once, but has fainted. If he has fainted because he thinks he has done enough let me prescribe for him a strong potion of the salts of fear. They may be useful to him. He that putteth his hand to the plough and looketh back is not worthy of the kingdom. "Remember Lot's wife." Shall I repeat that prescription, for it is a very useful one to those who leave off working for Christ? "Remember Lot's wife." If her fate be recollected perhaps your heart will be stirred up to renewed diligence.

But there are some who labour and are ready to faint. To them I would prescribe the "wines on the lees well refined," the rich promises of God's word, the sweet prospect of an eternal reward. I would recommend them to take the spirit of confidence in large quantities, yea, to be filled with it. Confide in God: he will not suffer you to labour in vain, or spend your strength for nought.

To you, my fellow-soldiers in this Church, I have these

words to say: These are not times for fainting, these are not times for idling. All the world is active; the wheels of commerce are revolving at a greater rate than ever; everywhere events march with a giant stride; we have seen what our fathers dreamed not of. Now, if ever, the Church of God ought to be awake. The demands of souls require our utmost diligence. The enemy is active in deceiving; we must be active in instructing and saving. Now, by the precious blood of Christ who bought you, oh, ye believers in Christ, bestir yourselves. If indeed ye be legitimately born from above, if the blood imperial be in your veins, and if ye be soldiers of that great Captain who unto death strove against sin; and if ye expect to wear the white robe and wave the palm of victory, in the name of the eternal and ever-living One, seek ye his Spirit and the divine energy, that ye may labour yet more abundantly and faint not. I am longing to have this church all in working order for the campaign on which we are about to enter. The long evenings are our time of hope. Oh, brethren and sisters, help us that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, between now and next spring, we may have many conversions and a large increase to our numbers. If the whole church should be awakened throughout we might expect far greater blessings than we have ever received before. Oh, Spirit of the living God come upon us, upon pastors, and officers, and members, and upon the whole congregation, and all the glory shall be unto thy name for ever and for ever. Amen.

THIRTEEN
DECLENSION FROM FIRST LOVE

SERMON GIVEN ON SEPTEMBER 26, 1858

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 2:4

FROM: NEW PARK STREET PULPIT VOLUME 4

*"Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee,
because thou hast left thy first love."*

REVELATION 2:4

IT IS A GREAT THING to have as much said in our commendation as was said concerning the church at Ephesus. Just read what "Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness," said of them—"I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted." Oh, my dear brothers and sisters, we may feel devoutly thankful if we can humbly, but honestly say, that this commendation applies to us.

Happy the man whose works are known and accepted of Christ. He is no idle Christian, he has practical godliness; he seeks by works of piety to obey God's whole law, by works of charity to manifest his love to the brotherhood, and by works of devotion to show his attachment to the cause of his Master. "I know thy works." Alas! some of you cannot get so far as that. Jesus Christ himself can bear no witness to your works, for you have not done any. You are Christians by profession, but you are not Christians as to your practice. I say again, happy is that man to whom Christ can say, "I know thy works." It is a commendation worth a world to have as much as that said of us. But further, Christ said, "and thy labour." This is more still. Many Christians have works, but only few Christians have labour. There were many preachers in Whitfield's day that had works, but Whitfield had labour. He toiled and travailed for souls. He was "in labours more abundant." Many were they in the apostle's days who did works for Christ; but pre-eminently the apostle Paul did labour for souls. It is not work merely, it is anxious work; it is casting forth the whole strength, and exercising all the energies for Christ. Could the Lord Jesus say as much as that of you—"I know thy labour?" No. He might say, "I know thy loitering; I know thy laziness; I know thy shirking of the work; I know thy boasting of what little thou dost; I know thine ambition to be thought something of, when thou art nothing." But ah! friends, it is more than most of us dare to hope that Christ could say, "I know thy labour."

But further, Christ says, "I know thy patience." Now there be some that labour, and they do it well. But what does hinder them? They only labour for a little season, and then they cease to work and begin to faint. But this church had laboured on for many years; it had thrown out all its energies—not in some spasmodic effort, but in a continual strain and unabated zeal for the glory of God. "I know thy patience." I say again, beloved, I

tremble to think how few out of this congregation could win such praise as this. "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil." The thorough hatred which the church had of evil doctrine, of evil practice, and its corresponding intense love for pure truth and pure practice—in that I trust some of us can bear a part. "And thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars." Here, too, I think some of us may hope to be clear. I know the difference between truth and error. Arminianism will never go down with us; the doctrine of men will not suit our taste. The husks, the bran, and the chaff, are not things that we can feed upon. And when we listen to those who preach another gospel, a holy anger burns within us, for we love the truth as it is in Jesus; and nothing but that will satisfy us. "And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted." They had borne persecutions, difficulties, hardships, embarrassments, and discouragements, yet had they never flagged, but always continued faithful. Who among us here present could lay claim to so much praise as this? What Sunday-school teacher have I here who could say, "I have laboured, and I have borne, and have had patience, and have not fainted." Ah, dear friends, if you can say it, it is more than I can. Often have I been ready to faint in the Master's work; and though I trust I have not been tired of it, yet there has sometimes been a longing to get from the work to the reward, and to go from the service of God, before I had fulfilled, as a hireling, my day. I am afraid we have not enough of patience, enough of labour, and enough of good works, to get even as much as this said of us. But it is in our text, I fear the mass of us must find our character. "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." There may be a preacher here present. Did you ever hear of a minister who had to preach his own funeral sermon? What

a labour that must have been, to feel that he had been condemned to die, and must preach against himself, and condemn himself! I stand here to-night, not in that capacity, but in one somewhat similar. I feel that I who preach shall this night condemn myself; and my prayer before I entered this pulpit was, that I might fearlessly discharge my duty, that I might deal honestly with my own heart, and that I might preach, knowing myself to be the chief culprit, and you each in your measure to have offended in this respect, even though none of you so grievously as I have done. I pray that God the Holy Spirit, through his renewings, may apply the word, not merely to your hearts, but to mine, that I may return to my first love, and that you may return with me.

In the first place, what was our first love? Secondly, how did we lose it? And thirdly, let me exhort you to get it again.

I. First, WHAT WAS OUR FIRST LOVE? Oh, let us go back—it is not many years with some of us. We are but youngsters in God's ways, and it is not so long with any of you that you will have very great difficulty in reckoning it. Then if you are Christians, those days were so happy that your memory will never forget them, and therefore you can easily return to that first bright spot in your history. Oh, what love was that which I had to my Saviour the first time he forgave my sins. I remember it. You remember each for yourselves, I dare say, that happy hour when the Lord appeared to us, bleeding on his cross, when he seemed to say, and did say in our hearts, "I am thy salvation; I have blotted out like a cloud thine iniquities, and like a thick cloud thy sins." Oh, how I loved him! Passing all loves except his own was that love which I felt for him then. If beside the door of the place in which I met with him there had been a stake of blazing faggots, I would have stood upon them without chains; glad to give my flesh, and blood, and bones, to be ashes that should testify my love to him. Had he asked me

then to give all my substance to the poor, I would have given all and thought myself to be amazingly rich in having beggared myself for his name's sake. Had he commanded me then to preach in the midst of all his foes, I could have said: —

*"There's not a lamb amongst thy flock
I would disdain to feed,
There's not a foe before whose face
I'd fear thy cause to plead."*

I could realize then the language of Rutherford, when he said, being full of love to Christ, once upon a time, in the dungeon of Aberdeen—"Oh, my Lord, if there were a broad hell betwixt me and thee, if I could not get at thee except by wading through it, I would not think twice but I would plunge through it all, if I might embrace thee and call thee mine."

Now it is that first love that you and I must confess I am afraid we have in a measure lost. Let us just see whether we have it. When we first loved the Saviour how earnest we were; there was not a single thing in the Bible, that we did not think most precious; there was not one command of his that we did not think to be like fine gold and choice silver. Never were the doors of his house open without our being there. if there were a prayer meeting at any hour in the day we were there. Some said of us that we had no patience, we would do too much and expose our bodies too frequently—but we never thought of that "Do yourself no harm," was spoken in our ears; but we would have done anything then. Why there are some of you who cannot walk to the Music Hall on a morning, it is too far. When you first joined the church, you would have walked twice as far. There are some of you who cannot be at the prayer meeting—business will not permit; yet when you were first baptized, there was never a prayer meeting from which you were absent.

It is the loss of your first love that makes you seek the comfort of your bodies instead of the prosperity of your souls. Many have been the young Christians who have joined this church, and old ones too, and I have said to them, "Well, have you got a ticket for a seat?" "No, sir." "Well, what will you do? Have you got a preference ticket?" "No, I cannot get one; but I do not mind standing in the crowd an hour, or two hours. I will come at five o'clock so that I can get in. Sometimes I don't get in, sir; but even then I feel that I have done what I ought to do in attempting to get in." "Well," but I have said, "you live five miles off, and there is coming and going back twice a day—you cannot do it." "Oh, sir," they have said "I can do it; I feel so much the blessedness of the Sabbath and so much enjoyment of the presence of the Saviour." I have smiled at them; I could understand it, but I have not felt it necessary to caution them—and now their love is cool enough. That first love does not last half so long as we could wish. Some of you stand convicted even here; you have not that blazing love, that burning love, that ridiculous love as the worldling would call it, which is after all the love to be most coveted and desired. No, you have lost your first love in that respect. Again, how obedient you used to be. If you saw a commandment, that was enough for you—you did it. But now you see a commandment, and you see profit on the other side; and how often do you dally with the profit and choose the temptation, instead of yielding an unsullied obedience to Christ.

Again, how happy you used to be in the ways of God. Your love was of that happy character that you could sing all day long; but now your religion has lost its lustre, the gold has become dim; you know that when you come to the Sacramental table, you often come there without enjoying it. There was a time when every bitter thing was sweet; whenever you heard the Word, it was all precious to you. Now you can grumble at

the minister. Alas! the minister has many faults, but the question is, whether there has not been a greater charge in you than there has been in him. Many are there who say, "I do not hear Mr. So-and-so as I used to,"—when the fault lies in their own ears. Oh, brethren, when we live near to Christ, and are in our first love, it is amazing what a little it takes to make a good preacher to us. Why, I confess I have heard a poor illiterate Primitive Methodist preach the gospel, and I felt as if I could jump for joy all the while I was listening to him, and yet he never gave me a new thought or a pretty expression, nor one figure that I could remember, but he talked about Christ; and even his common things were to my hungry spirit like dainty meats. And I have to acknowledge, and, perhaps, you have to acknowledge the same—that I have heard sermons from which I ought to have profited, but I have been thinking on the man's style, or some little mistakes in grammar. When I might have been holding fellowships with Christ in and through the ministry, I have, instead thereof, been getting abroad in my thoughts even to the ends of the earth. And what is the reason for this, but that I have lost my first love.

Again: when we were in our first love, what would we do for Christ; now how little will we do. Some of the actions which we performed when we were young Christians, but just converted, when we look back upon them, seem to have been wild and like idle tales. You remember when you were a lad and first came to Christ, you had a half-sovereign in your pocket; it was the only one you had, and you met with some poor saint and gave it all away. You did not regret that you had done it, your only regret was that you had not a great deal more, for you would have given all. You recollected that something was wanted for the cause of Christ. Oh! we could give anything away when we first loved the Saviour. If there was a preaching to be held five miles off, and we could walk with the lay-

preacher to be a little comfort to him in the darkness, we were off. If there was a Sunday-school, however early it might be, we would be up, so that we might be present. Unheard-of feats, things that we now look back upon with surprise, we could perform them. Why cannot we do them now? Do you know there are some people who always live upon what they have been. I speak very plainly now. There is a brother in this church who may take it to himself; I hope he will. It is not very many years ago since he said to me, when I asked him why he did not do something—"Well, I have done my share; I used to do this, and I have done the other; I have done so-and-so." Oh, may the Lord deliver him, and all of us, from living on "has beens!" It will never do to say we have done a thing. Suppose, for a solitary moment, the world should say, "I have turned round; I will stand still." Let the sea say, "I have been ebbing and flowing, lo! these many years; I will ebb and flow no more." Let the sun say, "I have been shining, and I have been rising and setting so many days; I have done this enough to earn me a goodly name; I will stand still;" and let the moon wrap herself up in veils of darkness, and say, "I have illuminated many a night, and I have lighted many a weary traveller across the moors; I will shut up my lamp and be dark forever." Brethren, when you and I cease to labour, let us cease to live. God has no intention to let us live a useless life. But mark this; when we leave our first works, there is no question about having lost our first love; that is sure. If there be strength remaining, if there be still power mentally and physically, if we cease from our office, if we abstain from our labours, there is no solution of this question which an honest conscience will accept, except this, "Thou hast lost thy first love, and, therefore, thou hast neglected thy first works." Ah! we were all so very ready to make excuses for ourselves. Many a preacher has retired from the ministry, long before he had any need to do so. He has married a rich wife.

Somebody has left him a little money, and he can do without it. He was growing weak in the ways of God, or else he would have said,

*"My body with my charge lay down,
And cease at once to work and live."*

And let any man here present who was a Sunday-school teacher and who has left it, who was a tract distributor and who has given it up, who was active in the way of God but is now idle, stand to-night before the bar of his conscience, and say whether he be not guilty of this charge which I bring against him, that he has lost his first love.

I need not stop to say also, that this may be detected in the closet as well as in our daily life; for when first love is lost, there is a want of that prayerfulness which we have. I remember the day I was up at three o'clock in the morning. Till six, I spent in prayer, wrestling with God. Then I had to walk some eight miles, and started off and walked to the baptism. Why, prayer was a delight to me then. My duties at that time kept me occupied pretty well from five o'clock in the morning till ten at night, and I had not a moment for retirement, yet I would be up at four o'clock to pray; and though I feel very sleepy now-a-days, and I feel that I could not be up to pray, it was not so then, when I was in my first love. Somehow or other, I never lacked time then. If I did not get it early in the morning, I got it late at night. I was compelled to have time for prayer with God; and what prayer it was! I had no need then to groan because I could not pray; for love, being fervent, I had sweet liberty at the throne of grace. But when first love departs, we begin to think that ten minutes will do for prayer, instead of an hour, and we read a verse or two in the morning, whereas we used to read a portion, but never used to go into the world without getting

some marrow and fatness. Now, business has so increased, that we must get into bed as soon as we can; we have not time to pray. And then at dinner time, we used to have a little time for communion; that is dropped. And then on the Sabbath-day, we used to make it a custom to pray to God when we got home from his house, for just five minutes before dinner, so that what we heard we might profit by; that is dropped. And some of you that are present were in the habit of retiring for prayer when you went home; your wives have told that story; the messengers have heard it when they have called at your houses, when they have asked the wife—"What is your husband?" "Ah!" she has said, "he is a godly man; he cannot come home to his breakfast but he must slip upstairs alone. I know what he is doing—he is praying. Then when he is at table, he often says—"Mary, I have had a difficulty to-day, we must go and have a word or two of prayer together." And some of you could not take a walk without prayer, you were so fond of it you could not have too much of it. Now where is it? You know more than you did; you have grown older; you have grown richer, perhaps. You have grown wiser in some respects; but you might give up all you have got, to go back to

*"Those peaceful hours you once enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still!"
Oh, what would you give if you could fill
"That aching void,
The world can never fill,"
but which only the same love that you had at
first, can ever fully satisfy!*

II. And now, beloved, WHERE DID YOU AND I LOSE OUR FIRST LOVE, if we have lost it? Let each one speak for himself, or rather, let me speak for each.

Have you not lost your first love in the world some of you? You used to have that little shop once, you had not very much business; well, you had enough, and a little to spare. However, there was a good turn came in business; you took two shops, and you are getting on very well. Is it not marvellous, that when you grew richer and had more business, you began to have less grace?

Oh, friends, it is a very serious thing to grow rich? Of all the temptations to which God's children are exposed it is the worst, because it is one that they do not dread, and therefore it is the more subtle temptation. You know a traveller if he is going a journey, takes a staff with him, it is a help to him; but suppose he is covetous, and says, "I will have a hundred of these sticks," that will be no help to him at all; he has only got a load to carry, and it stops his progress instead of assisting him. But I do believe there are many Christians that lived near to God, when they were living on a pound a week, that might give up their yearly incomes with the greatest joy, if they could have now the same contentment, the same peace of mind, the same nearness of access to God, that they had in times of poverty. Ah, too much of the world is a bad thing for any man! I question very much whether a man ought not sometimes to stop, and say, "There is an opportunity of doing more trade, but it will require the whole of my time, and I must give up that hour I have set apart for prayer; I will not do the trade at all; I have enough, and therefore let it go. I would rather do trade with heaven than trade with earth."

Again: do you not think also that perhaps you may have lost your first love by getting too much with worldly people? When you were in your first love, no company suited you but the godly; but now you have got a young man that you talk with, who talks a great deal more about frivolity, and gives you a great deal more of the froth and scum of levity, than he ever gives you

of solid godliness. Once you were surrounded by those that fear the Lord, but now you dwell in the tents of "Freedom," where you hear little but cursing. But, friends, he that carrieth coals in his bosom must be burned; and he that hath ill companions cannot but be injured. Seek, then, to have godly friends, that thou mayest maintain thy first love.

But another reason. Do you not think that perhaps you have forgotten how much you owe to Christ? There is one thing, that I feel from experience I am compelled to do very often, viz., to go back to where I first started: —

*"I, the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me."*

You and I get talking about our being saints; we know our election, we rejoice in our calling, we go on to sanctification; and we forget the hole of the pit whence we were digged. Ah, remember my brother, thou art nothing now but a sinner saved through grace; remember what thou wouldst have been, if the Lord had left thee. And surely, then, by going back continually to first principles, and to the great foundation stone, the cross of Christ, thou wilt be led to go back to thy first love.

Dost thou not think, again, that thou hast lost thy first love by neglecting communion with Christ? Now preacher, preach honestly, and preach at thyself. Has there not been, sometimes, this temptation to do a great deal for Christ, but not to live a great deal with Christ? One of my besetting sins, I feel, is this. If there is anything to be done actively for Christ, I instinctively prefer the active exercise to the passive quiet of his presence. There are some of you, perhaps, that are attending a Sunday school, who would be more profitably employed to your own souls if you were spending that hour in communion with Christ. Perhaps, too, you attend the means so often, that you

have no time in secret to improve what you gain in the means. Mrs. Bury once said, that if "all the twelve apostles were preaching in a certain town, and we could have the privilege of hearing them preach, yet if they kept us out of our closets, and led us to neglect prayer, better for us never to have heard their names, than to have gone to listen to them." We shall never love Christ much except we live near to him. Love to Christ is dependent on our nearness to him. It is just like the planets and the sun. Why are some of the planets cold? Why do they move at so slow a rate? Simply because they are so far from the sun: put them where the planet Mercury is, and they will be in a boiling heat, and spin round the sun in rapid orbits. So, beloved, if we live near to Christ, we cannot help loving him: the heart that is near Jesus must be full of his love. But when we live days and weeks and months without personal intercourse, without real fellowship, how can we maintain love towards a stranger? He must be a friend, and we must stick close to him, as he sticks close to us—closer than a brother; or else, we shall never have our first love.

There are a thousand reasons that I might have given, but I leave each of you to search your hearts, to find out why you have lost, each of you, your first love.

III. Now, dear friends, just give me all your attention for a moment, while I earnestly beseech and implore of you to **SEEK TO GET YOUR FIRST LOVE RESTORED**. Shall I tell you why? Brother, though thou be a child of God, if thou hast lost thy first love, there is some trouble near at hand. "Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth," and he is sure to chasten thee when thou sinnest. It is calm with you to night, is it? Oh! but dread that calm, there is a tempest lowering. Sin is the harbinger of tempest: read the history of David. All David's life, in all his troubles, even in the rocks of the wild goats, and in the caves of Engedi, he was the happiest of men till he lost his first

love; and from the day when his lustful eye was fixed upon Bathsheba, even to the last, he went with broken bones sorrowing to his grave. It was one long string of afflictions: take heed it be not so with thee. "Ah, but," you say, "I shall not sin as David did." Brother, you cannot tell: if you have lost your first love, what should hinder you but that you should lose your first purity? Love and purity go together. He that loveth is pure; he that loveth little shall find his purity decrease, until it becomes marred and polluted. I should not like to see you, my dear friends, tried and troubled: I do weep with them that weep. If there be a child of yours sick, and I hear of it, I can say honestly, I do feel something like a father to your children, and as a father to you. If you have sufferings and afflictions, and I know them, I desire to feel for you, and spread your griefs before the throne of God. Oh, I do not want my heavenly Father to take the rod out to you all; but he will do it, if you fall from your first love. As sure as ever he is a Father, he will let you have the rod if your love cools. Bastards may escape the rod. If you are only base-born professors you may go happily along; but the true-born child of God, when his love declines, must and shall smart for it.

There is yet another thing, my dear friends, if we lose our first love—what will the world say of us if we lose our first love? I must put this, not for our name's sake, but for God's dear name's sake. O what will the world say of us? There was a time, and it is not gone yet, when men must point at this church, and say of it, "There is a church, that is like a bright oasis in the midst of a desert, a spot of light in the midst of darkness." Our prayer meetings were prayer meetings indeed, the congregations were as attentive as they were numerous. Oh, how you did drink in the words; how your eyes flashed with a living fire, whenever the name of Christ was mentioned! And what, if in a little time it shall be said, "Ah, that church is quite as sleepy as

any other; look at them when the minister preaches, why they can sleep under him, they do not seem to care for the truth. Look at the Spurgeonites, they are just as cold and careless as others; they used to be called the most pugnacious people in the world, for they were always ready to defend their Master's name and their Master's truth, and they got that name in consequence, but now you may swear in their presence and they will not rebuke you: how near these people once used to live to God and his house, they were always there; look at their prayer meetings, they would fill their seats as full at a prayer meeting as at an ordinary service; now they are all gone back." "Ah," says the world, "just what I said; the fact is, it was a mere spasm, a little spiritual excitement, and it has all gone down." And the worldling says, "Ah, ah, so would I have it, so would I have it!" I was reading only the other day of an account of my ceasing to be popular; it was said my chapel was now nearly empty, that nobody went to it: and I was exceedingly amused and interested. "Well, if it come to that," I said, "I shall not grieve or cry very much; hut if it is said the church has left its zeal and first love, that is enough to break any honest pastor's heart." Let the chaff go, but if the wheat remain we have comfort. Let those who are the outer-court worshippers cease to hear, what signifieth? let them turn aside, but O, ye soldiers of the Cross, if ye turn your backs in the day of battle, where shall I hide my head? what shall I say for the great name of my Master, or for the honour of his gospel? It is our boast and joy, that the old-fashioned doctrine has been revived in these days, and that the truth that Calvin preached, that Paul preached, and that Jesus preached, is still mighty to save, and far surpasses in power all the neologies and new-fangled notions of the present time. But what will the heretic say, when he sees it is all over? "Ah," he will say, "that old truth urged on by the fanaticism of a foolish young man, did wake the people a little; but it lacked marrow

and strength, and it all died away!" Will ye thus dishonour your Lord and Master, ye children of the heavenly king? I beseech you do not so—but endeavour to receive again as a rich gift of the Spirit your first love.

And now, once again, dear friends, there is a thought that ought to make each of us feel alarmed, if we have lost our first love. May not this question arise in our hearts—Was I ever a child of God at all? Oh, my God, must I ask myself this question? Yes, I will. Are there not many of whom it is said, they went out from us because they were not of us; for if they had been of us, doubtless they would have continued with us? Are there not some whose goodness is as the morning cloud and as the early dew—may that not have been my case? I am speaking for you all. Put the question—may I not have been impressed under a certain sermon, and may not that impression have been a mere carnal excitement? May it not have been that I thought I repented but did not really repent? May it not have been the case, that I got a hope somewhere but had not a right to it? And I never had the loving faith that unites me to the Lamb of God. And may it not have been that I only thought I had love to Christ, and never had it, for if I really had love to Christ should I be as I now am? See how far I have come down! May I not keep on going down until my end shall be perdition, and the never-dying worm, and the fire unquenchable? Many have gone from heights of a profession to the depths of damnation, and may not I be the same? May it not be true of me that I am as a wandering star for whom is reserved blackness of darkness for ever? May I not have shone brightly in the midst of the church for a little while, and yet may I not be one of those poor foolish virgins who took no oil in my vessel with my lamp, and therefore my lamp will go out? Let me think, if I go on as I am, it is impossible for me to stop, if I am going downwards I may go on going downwards. And O my God, if I go on backsliding for

another year—who knows where I may have backslidden to? Perhaps into some gross sin. Prevent, prevent it by thy grace! Perhaps I may backslide totally. If I am a child of God I know I cannot do that. But still, may it not happen that I only thought I was a child of God, and may I not so far go back that at last my very name to live shall go because I always have been dead? Oh! how dreadful it is to think and to see in our church, members who turn out to be dead members! If I could weep tears of blood, they would not express the emotion that I ought to feel, and that you ought to feel, when you think there are some among us that are dead branches of a living vine. Our deacons find that there is much of unsoundness in our members. I grieve to think that because we cannot see all our members, there are many who have backslidden. There is one who says, "I joined the church, it is true, but I never was converted. I made a profession of being converted, but I was not, and now I take no delight in the things of God. I am moral, I attend the house of prayer, but I am not converted. My name may be taken off the books; I am not a godly man." There are others among you who perhaps have gone even further than that—have gone into sin, and yet I may not know it. It may not come to my ears in so large a church as this. Oh! I beseech you, my dear friends, by him that liveth and was dead, let not your good be evil spoken of, by losing your first love.

Are there some among you that are professing religion, and not possessing it? Oh, give up your profession, or else get the truth and sell it not. Go home, each of you, and cast yourselves on your faces before God, and ask him to search you, and try you, and know your ways, and see if there be any evil way in you, and pray that he may lead you in the way everlasting. And if hitherto you have only professed, but have not possessed, seek ye the Lord while he may be found, and call ye upon him while he is near. Ye are warned, each one of you; you are

solemnly told to search yourselves and make short work of it. And if any of you be hypocrites, at God's great day, guilty as I may be in many respects, there is one thing I am clear of—I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. I do not believe that any people in the world shall be damned more terribly than you shall if you perish; for of this thing I have not shunned to speak—the great evil of making a profession without being sound at heart. No, I have even gone so near to personality, that I could not have gone further without mentioning your names. And rest assured, God's grace being with me, neither you nor myself shall be spared in the pulpit in any personal sin that I may observe in any one of you. But oh, do let us be sincere! May the Lord sooner split this church till only a tenth of you remain, than ever suffer you to be multiplied a hundred-fold unless you be multiplied with the living in Zion, and with the holy flock that the Lord himself hath ordained, and will keep unto the end. To-morrow morning, we shall meet together and pray, that we may have our first love restored; and I hope many of you will be found there to seek again the love which you have almost lost.

And as for you that never had that love at all, the Lord breathe it upon you now for the love of Jesus.

Amen.

FOURTEEN
LOVE'S COMPLAINING

SERMON GIVEN ON OCTOBER 24, 1886

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 2:4-5

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 32

*“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee,
because thou hast left thy first love.
Remember therefore from whence thou art
fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or
else I will come unto thee quickly, and will
remove thy candlestick out of his place,
except thou repent.”*

REVELATION 2:4, 5.

IT was the work of the priest to go into the holy place and to trim the seven-branched lamp of gold: see how our Great High Priest walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks: his work is not occasional, but constant. Wearing robes which are

at once royal and priestly, he is seen lighting the holy lamps, pouring in the sacred oil, and removing impurities which would dim the light.

Hence our Lord's fitness to deal with the churches, which are these golden lamp-stands, for no one knows so much about the lamps as the person whose constant work it is to watch them and trim them. No one knows the churches as Jesus does, for the care of all the churches daily comes upon him, he continually walks among them, and holds their ministers as stars in his right hand. His eyes are perpetually upon the churches, so that he knows their works, their sufferings, and their sins; and those eyes are as a flame of fire, so that he sees with a penetration, discernment, and accuracy to which no other can attain. We sometimes judge the condition of religion too leniently, or else we err on the other side, and judge too severely. Our eyes are dim with the world's smoke; but his eyes are as a flame of fire. He sees the churches through and through, and knows their true condition much better than they know themselves. The Lord Jesus Christ is a most careful observer of churches and of individuals; nothing is hid from his observant eye.

As he is the most careful observer, so he is the most candid. He is ever "the faithful and true witness." He loves much, and therefore he never judges harshly. He loves much, and therefore he always judges jealously. Jealousy is the sure attendant of such love as his. He will neither speak smooth words nor bitter words; but he will speak the truth—the truth in live, the truth as he himself perceives it, and as he would have us perceive it. Well may he say, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches," since his sayings are so true, so just, so weighty.

Certainly no observer can be so tender as the Son of God. Those lamps are very precious to him: it cost him his life to

light them. "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it." Every church is to our Lord a more sublime thing than a constellation in the heavens: as he is precious to his saints, so are they precious to him. He careth little for empires, kingdoms, or republics; but his heart is set on the kingdom of righteousness, of which his cross is the royal standard. He must reign until his foes are vanquished, and this is the great thought of his mind at this present, "From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool." He ceases not to watch over his church: his sacrifice is ended, but not his service in caring for the golden lamps. He has completed the redemption of his bride, but he continues her preservation.

I therefore feel at this time that we may well join in a prayer to our Lord Jesus to come into our midst and put our light in order. Oh for a visit from himself such as he paid in vision to the seven churches of Asia! With him is the oil to feed the living flame, and he knows how to pour it in according to due measure; with him are those golden snuffers with which to remove every superfluity of naughtiness, that our lights may so shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven. Oh for his presence now, to search us and to sanctify us; to cause us to shine forth to his Father's praise! We would be judged of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world. We would pray this morning, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." All things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do; and we delight to have it so. We invite thee, O great High Priest, to come into this thy sanctuary, and look to this thy lamp this morning.

In the text, as it is addressed to the church at Ephesus and to us, we note three things. First, we note that Christ perceives: "I know thy works . . . nevertheless I have somewhat against

thee." Secondly, Christ prescribes: "Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent," and so forth. Thirdly, Christ persuades— persuades with a threatening: "I will remove thy candlestick out of his place persuades, also, with a promise: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." If the Lord himself be here at this time, our plan of discourse will be a river of life; but if he be not among us by his Holy Spirit, it will be as the dry bed of a torrent which bears the name of "river," but lacks the living stream. We expect our Lord's presence; he will come to the lamps which his office calls upon him to trim; it has been his wont to be with us; some of us have met him this morning already, and we have constrained him to tarry with us.

I. First, then, we notice that HE PERCEIVES.

Our Lord sorrowfully perceives the faults of his church—"Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee"; but he does not so perceive those faults as to be forgetful of that which he can admire and accept; for he begins his letter with commendations, "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil." Do not think, my brethren, that our Beloved is blind to the beauties of his church. On the contrary, he delights to observe them. He can see beauties where she herself cannot see them. Where we observe much to deplore, his loving eyes see much to admire. The graces which he himself creates he can always perceive. When we in the earnestness of self-examination overlook them, and write bitter things against ourselves, the Lord Jesus sees even in those bitter self-condemnations a life and earnestness and sincerity which he loves. Our Lord has a keen eye for all that is good. When he searches our hearts he never passes by the faintest longing, or desire, or faith, or love, of any of his people. He says, "I know thy works."

But this is our point at this time, that while Jesus can see all

that is good, yet in very faithfulness he sees all that is evil. His love is not blind. He does not say, "As many as I love I commend"; but, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." It is more necessary for us that we should make a discovery of our faults than of our virtues. So notice in this text that Christ perceiveth the flaw in his church, even in the midst of her earnest service. The church at Ephesus was full of work. "I know thy works and thy labour, and for my name's sake thou hast laboured, and hast not fainted." It was such a laborious church that it pushed on and on with diligent perseverance, and never seemed to flag in its divine mission. Oh that we could say as much of all our churches! I have lived to see many brilliant projects lighted and left to die out in smoke. I have heard of schemes which were to illuminate the world; but not a spark remains. Holy perseverance is a great desideratum. In these three and thirty years we thank God he has enabled us to labour and not to faint. There has been a continuance of everything attempted, and no drawing back from anything. "This is the work, this is the labour," to hold out even to the end. Oh how I have dreaded lest we should have to give up any holy enterprise or cut short any gracious effort! Hitherto the Lord has helped us. With men and means, liberality and zeal, he has supplied us. In this case the angel of the church has been very little of an angel from heaven, but very much of a human angel; for in the weakness of my flesh and in the heaviness of my spirit have I pursued my calling; but I have pursued it. By the help of God I continue to this day, and this church with equal footsteps is at my side; for which the whole praise is due to the Lord, who fainteth not, neither is weary. Having put my hand to the plough I have not looked back, but have steadily pressed forward, making straight furrows; but it has been by the grace of God alone.

Alas! under all the labouring the Lord Jesus perceived that

the Ephesians had left their first love; and this was a grievous fault. So it may be in this church; every wheel may continue to revolve, and the whole machinery of ministry may be kept going at its normal rate, and yet there may be a great secret evil which Jesus perceives, and this may be marring all.

But this church at Ephesus was not only laborious, it was patient in suffering great persecution. He says of it: "I know thy works and thy patience, and how thou hast borne, and hast patience, and hast not fainted" Persecution upon persecution visited the faithful, but they bore it all with holy courage and constancy, and continued still confessing their Lord. This was good, and the Lord highly approved it; but yet underneath it he saw the tokens of decline; they had left their first love. So there may seem to be all the patient endurance and dauntless courage that there should be, and yet as a fair apple may have a worm at its core, so may it be with the church when it looks best to the eye of friends.

The Ephesian church excelled in something else, namely, in its discipline, its soundness in the faith, and fidelity towards heretics; for the Lord says of it, "how thou canst not bear them which are evil." They would not have it: they would not tolerate false doctrine, they would not put up with unclean living. They fought against evil, not only in the common people, but in prominent individuals. "Thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars." They had dealt with the great ones; they had not flinched from the unmasking of falsehood. Those who seemed to be apostles they had dragged to the light and discovered to be deceivers. This church was not honeycombed with doubt; it laid no claim to breadth of thought and liberality of view; it was honest to its Lord. He says of it, "This thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate." This was grand of them: it showed a backbone of truth. I wish some

of the churches of this age had a little of this holy decision about them; for nowadays, if a man be clever, he may preach the vilest lie that was ever vomited from the mouth hell, and it will go down with some. He may assail every doctrine of the gospel, he may blaspheme the Holy Trinity, he may trample on the blood of the Son of God, and yet nothing shall be said about it if he be held in repute as a man of advanced thought and liberal ideas. The church at Ephesus was not of this mind. She was strong in her convictions; she could not yield the faith, nor play the traitor to her Lord. For this her Lord commended her: and yet he says, "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." When love dies orthodox doctrine becomes a corpse, a powerless formalism. Adhesion to the truth sours into bigotry when the sweetness and light of love to Jesus depart. Love Jesus, and then it is well to hate the deeds of the Nicolaitanes; but mere hate of evil will tend to evil if love of Jesus be not there to sanctify it. I need not make a personal application; but that which is spoken to Ephesus may be spoken at this hour to ourselves. As we hope that we may appropriate the commendation, so let us see whether the exposition may not also apply to us. "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." Thus I have shown you that Jesus sees the evil beneath all the good: he does not ignore the good, but he will not pass over the ill.

So, next, this evil was a very serious one; it was love declining: "Thou hast left thy first love." "Is that serious?" saith one. It is the most serious ill of all; for the church is the bride of Christ, and for a bride to fail in love is to fail in all things. It is idle for the wife to say that she is obedient, and so forth: if love to her husband has evaporated, her wifely duty cannot be fulfilled, she has lost the very life and soul of the marriage state. So, my brethren, this is a most important matter, our love to Christ, because it touches the very heart of that communion with him

which is the crown and essence of our spiritual life. As a church we must love Jesus, or else we have lost our reason for existence. A church has no reason for being a church when she has no love within her heart, or when that love grows cold. Have I not often reminded you that almost any disease may be hopefully endured except disease of the heart? But when our sickness is a disease of the heart, it is full of danger; and it was so in this case: "Thou hast left thy first love." It is a disease of the heart, a central, fatal disease, unless the great Physician shall interpose to stay its progress, and to deliver us from it. Oh, in any man, in any woman, any child of God here, let alone in the church as a whole, if there be a leaving of the first love, it is a woful thing! Lord have mercy upon us; Christ have mercy upon us: this should be our solemn litany at once. No peril can be greater than this. Lose love, lose all. Leave our first love, we have left strength, and peace, and joy, and holiness.

I call your attention, however, to this point, that it was he that found it out. "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." Jesus himself found it out! I do not know how it strikes you; but as I thought it over, this fact brought the tears to my eyes. When I begin to leave off loving Christ, or love him less than I do, I would like to find it out myself; and if I did so, there would soon be a cure for it. But for him to find it out, oh, it seems so hard, so sad a thing! That we should keep on growing cold, and cold, and cold, and never care about it till the Beloved points it out to us. Why even the angel of the church did not find it out; the minister did not know it; but he saw it who loves us so well, that he delights in our love, and pines when it begins to fail. To him we are unutterably dear; he loved us up out of the pit into his bosom, loved us up from the dunghill among beggars to sit at his right hand upon his throne; and it is sorrowful that he should have to complain of our cooling love while we are utterly indifferent to the matter. Does

Jesus care more about our love than we do? He loves us better than we love ourselves. How good of him to care one jot about our love! This is no complaint of an enemy, but of a dear wounded friend.

I notice that Jesus found it out with great pain. I can hardly conceive a greater grief to him as the husband of his church than to look her in the face and say, "Thou hast left thy first love." What can she give him but love? Will she deny him this? A poor thing is the church of herself: her Lord married her when she was in beggary; and if she does not give him love, what has she to give him? If she begins to be unfaithful in heart to him, what is she worth? Why, an unloving wife is a foul fountain of discomfort and dishonour to her husband. O beloved, shall it be so with thee? Wilt thou grieve Emmanuel? Wilt thou wound thy Well-beloved? Church of God, wilt thou grieve him whose heart was pierced for thy redemption? Brother, sister, can you and I let Jesus find out that our love is departing, that we are ceasing to be zealous for his name? Can we wound him so? Is not this to crucify the Lord afresh? Might he not hold up his hands this morning with fresh blood upon them, and say, These are the wounds which I received in the house of my friends. It was nothing that I died for them, but ill it is that, after having died for them, they have failed to give me their hearts"? Jesus is not so sick of our sin as of our lukewarmness. It is a sad business to my heart; I hope it will be sad to all whom it concerns, that our Lord should be the first to spy out our declines in love.

The Saviour, having thus seen this with pain, now points it out. As I read this passage over to myself, I noticed that the Saviour had nothing to say about the sins of the heathen among whom the Ephesians dwelt: they are alluded to because it must have been the heathen who persecuted the church, and caused it to endure, and exhibit patience. The Saviour,

however, has nothing to say against the heathen; and he does not say much more than a word about those who were evil. These had been cast out, and he merely says: "Thou canst not bear them which are evil." He denounced no judgment upon the Nicolaitanes, except that he hated them; and even the apostles which were found to be liars the Master dismisses with that word. He leaves the ungodly in their own condemnation. But what he has to say is against his own beloved: "I have somewhat against thee." It seems as if the Master might pass over sin in a thousand others, but he cannot wink at failure of love in his own espoused one. "The Lord thy God is a jealous God." The Saviour loves, so that his love is cruel as the grave against cold-heartedness. He said of the church of Laodicea, "I will spue thee out of my mouth." This was one of his own churches, too, and yet she made him sick with her lukewarmness. God grant that we may not be guilty of such a crime as that!

The Saviour pointed out the failure of love; and when he pointed it out he called it by a lamentable name. "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen." He calls it a fall to leave our first love. Brothers, sisters, this church had not been licentious, it had not gone aside to false doctrine, it had not become idle, it had not been cowardly in the hour of persecution; but this one sin summed up the whole— she did not love Christ as she once loved him, and he calls this a fall. A fall indeed it is. "Oh, I thought," saith one, "that if a member of the church got drunk that was a fall." That is a grievous fall, but it is a fall if we become intoxicated with the world, and lose the freshness of our devotion to Jesus. It is a fall from a high estate of fellowship to the dust of worldliness. "Thou art fallen." The word sounds very harshly in my ears— no, not harshly, for his love speaks it in so pathetic a manner; but it thunders in my soul deep down. I cannot bear it. It is so sadly true. "Thou art fallen."

“Remember from whence thou art fallen.” Indeed, O Lord, we have fallen when we have left our first love for thee.

The Master evidently counts this decline of love to be a personal wrong done to himself. “I have somewhat against thee.” It is not an offence against the king, nor against the judge, but against the Lord Jesus as the husband of the church: an offence against the very heart of Christ himself. “I have somewhat against thee.” He does not say, “Thy neighbour has somewhat against thee, thy child has somewhat against thee, thy God has somewhat against thee,” but “I, I thy hope, thy joy, thy delight, thy Saviour, I have this against thee.” The word *somewhat* is an intruder here. Our translators put it in italics, and well they might, for it is a bad word, since it seems to make a small thing of a very grave change. The Lord has this against us, and it is no mere “*somewhat*.” Come, brothers and sisters, if we have not broken any law, nor offended in any way so as to grieve anybody else, this is sorrow enough, if our love has grown in the least degree chill towards him; for we have done a terrible wrong to our best friend. This is the bitterness of our offence: Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight, that I have left my first love. The Saviour tells us this most lovingly. I wish I knew how to speak as tenderly as he does; and yet I feel at this moment that I can and must be tender in this matter, for I am speaking about myself as much as about anybody else. I am grieving, grieving over some here present, grieving for all of us, but grieving most of all for myself, that our Well-beloved should have cause to say, “I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.”

So much for what our Lord perceives. Holy Spirit, bless it to us!

II. And now, secondly, let us note what THE SAVIOUR PRESCRIBES. The Saviour’s prescription is couched in these three words: “Remember,” “Repent,” “Return.”

The first word is Remember. "Thou hast left thy first love." Remember, then, what thy first love was, and compare thy present condition with it. At first nothing diverted thee from thy Lord. He was thy life, thy love, thy joy. Now thou lookest for recreation somewhere else, and other charms and other beauties win thy heart. Art thou not ashamed of this? Once thou wast never wearied with hearing of him and serving him. Never wert thou overdone with Christ and his gospel: many sermons, many prayer-meetings, many Bible readings, and yet none too many. Now sermons are long, and services are dull, and thou must have thy jaded appetite excited with novelties. How is this? Once thou wast never displeased with Jesus whatever he did with thee. If thou hadst been sick, or poor, or dying, thou wouldst still have loved and blessed his name for all things. He remembers this fondness, and regrets its departure. He says to thee to-day, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness." Thou wouldst have gone after thy Lord anywhere in those days: across the sea, or through the fire, thou wouldst have pursued him; nothing would have been too hot or too heavy for thee then. Is it so now? Remember! Remember from whence thou art fallen. Remember the vows, the tears, the communings, the happy raptures of those days; remember and compare with them thy present state.

Remember and consider, that when thou wast in thy first love, that love was none too warm. Even then, when thou didst live to him, and for him, and with him, thou wast none too holy, none too consecrated, none too zealous. If thou wast not too forward then, what art thou now— now that thou hast come down even from that poor attainment? Remember the past with sad forebodings of the future. If thou hast come down from where thou wast, who is to tell thee where thou wilt cease thy declining? He who has sunk so far may fall much farther. Is it

not so? Though thou sayest in thy heart like Hazael, "Is thy servant a dog?" thou mayest turn out worse than a dog yet, yea, prove a very wolf. Who knows? thou mayest even now be a devil! Thou mayest turn out a Judas, a son of perdition, and deny thy Master, selling him for thirty pieces of silver. When a stone begins to fall it falls with an ever-increasing rate; and when a soul begins to leave its first love, it quits it more and more, and more and more, till at last it falleth terribly. Remember!

The next word of the prescription is "Repent." Repent as thou didst at first. The word so suitable to sinners is suitable to thee, for thou hast grievously sinned. Repent of the wrong thou hast done thy Lord by leaving thy first love of him. Couldst thou have lived a seraphic life, only breathing his love, only existing for him, thou hadst done little enough; but to quit thy first love, how grievously hast thou wronged him! That love was well deserved, was it not? Why, then, hast thou left it? Is Jesus less fair than he was? Does he love thee less than he did? Has he been less kind and tender to thee than he used to be? Say, hast thou outgrown him? Canst thou do without him? Hast thou a hope of salvation apart from him? I charge thee, repent of this thine ill-doing towards one who has a greater claim upon thy love than ever he had. He ought to be to-day loved more than thou didst love him at thy very best! O my heart, is not all this most surely true? How ill art thou behaving! What an ingrate art thou! Repent! Repent!

Repent of much good that thou hast left undone through want of love. Oh, if thou hadst always loved thy Lord at thy best, what mightest thou not have known of him by this time! What good deeds thou mightest have done by force of his love! How many hearts mightest thou have won for thy Lord if thine own heart had been fuller of love, if thine own soul had been

more on fire! Thou hast lived a poor beggarly life because thou hast allowed such poverty of love.

Repent! Repent! To my mind, as I thought over this text, the call for repentance grew louder and louder, because of the occasion of its utterance. Here is the glorious Lord, coming to his church and speaking to her angel in tones of tender kindness. He condescends to visit his people in ail his majesty and glory, intending nothing but to manifest himself in love to his own elect as he doth not to the world. And yet he is compelled even then to take to chiding, and to say, "I have this against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." Here is a love-visit clouded with upbraiding— necessary upbraiding. What mischief sin has done! It is a dreadful thing that when Jesus comes to his own dear bride he should have to speak in grief, and not in joy. Must holy communion, which is the wine of heaven, be embittered with the tonic of expostulation? I see the upper springs of nearest fellowship, where the waters of life leap from their first source in the heart of God. Are not these streams most pure and precious? If a man drink thereof he liveth for ever. Shall it be that even at the fountain-head they shall be dashed with bitterness? Even when Christ communes personally with us must he say, "I have somewhat against thee"? Break, my heart, that it should be so! Well may we repent with a deep repentance when our choicest joys are flavoured with the bitter herbs of regret, that our best Beloved should have somewhat against us.

But then he says in effect, Return. The third word is this—"Repent, and do the first works." Notice, that he does not say, "Repent, and get back thy first love." This seems rather singular; but then love is the chief of the first works, and, moreover, the first works can only come of the first love. There must be in every declining Christian a practical repentance. Do not be satisfied with regrets and resolves. Do the first works; do not

strain after the first emotions, but do the first works. No renewal is so valuable as the practical cleansing of our way. If the life be made right, it will prove that the love is so. In doing the first works you will prove that you have come back to your first love. The prescription is complete, because the doing of the first works is meant to include the feeling of the first feelings, the sighing of the first sighs, the enjoying of the first joys: these are all supposed to accompany returning obedience and activity.

We are to get back to these first works at once. Most men come to Christ with a leap; and I have observed that many who come back to him usually do so at a bound. The slow revival of one's love is almost an impossibility; as well expect the dead to rise by degrees. Love to Christ is often love at first sight: we see him, and are conquered by him. If we grow cold, the best thing we can do is to fasten our eyes on him till we cry, "My soul melted while my Beloved spake." It is a happy circumstance if I can cry, "Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib." How sweet for the Lord to put us back again at once into the old place, back again in a moment! My prayer is that it may be so this morning with any declining one. May you so repent as not merely to feel the old feelings, but instantly to do the first works, and be once more as eager, as zealous, as generous, as prayerful, as you used to be! If we should again see you breaking the alabaster box, we should know that the old love had returned. May the good Master help us to do as well as ever, yea, much better than before!

Notice, however, that this will require much of effort and warfare; for the promise which is made is "to him that overcometh." Overcoming implies conflict. Depend upon it, if you conquer a wandering heart, you will have to fight for it. "To him that overcometh," saith he, "will I give to eat of the tree of life." You must fight your way back to the garden of the Lord.

You will have to fight against lethargy, against an evil heart of unbelief, against the benumbing influence of the world. In the name and power of him who bids you repent, you must wrestle and struggle till you get the mastery over self, and yield your whole nature to your Lord.

So I have shown you how Christ prescribes, and I greatly need a few minutes for the last part, because I wish to dwell with solemn earnestness upon it. I have no desire to say a word by which I should show myself off as an orator, but I long to speak a word by which I may prove myself a true brother pleading with you in deep sympathy, because in all the ill which I rebuke I mourn my own personal share. Bless us, O Spirit of the Lord!

III. Now see, brethren, HE PERSUADES. This is the third point: the Lord Jesus persuades his erring one to repent.

First, he persuades with a warning: "I will come unto thee"; "quickly" is not in the original: the Revised Version has left it out. Our Lord is generally very slow at the work of judgment: "I will come unto thee, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent." This he must do: he cannot allow his light to be apart from love, and if the first love be left, the church shall be left in darkness. The truth must always shine, but not always in the same place. The place must be made fit by love, or the light shall be removed.

Our Lord means, first, I will take away the comfort of the Word. He raises up certain ministers, and makes them burning and shining lights in the midst of his church, and when the people gather together they are cheered and enlightened by their shining. A ministry blessed of the Lord is a singular comfort to the church of God. The Lord can easily take away that light which has brought comfort to so many: he can remove the good man to another sphere, or he can call him home to his rest. The extinguisher of death can put out the candle which

now gladdens the house. The church which has lost a ministry by which the Lord's glory has shone forth has lost a good deal; and if this loss has been sent in chastisement for decline of love it is all the harder to bear. I can point you to places where once was a man of God, and all went well; but the people grew cold, and the Lord took away their leader, and the place is now a desolation: those who now attend those courts and listen to a modern ministry cry out because of the famine of the Word of the Lord. O friends, let us value the light while we have it, and prove that we do so by profiting by it; but how can we profit if we leave our first love? The Lord may take away our comfort as a church if our first zeal shall die down.

But the candlestick also symbolizes usefulness: it is that by which a church shines. The use of a church is to preserve the truth, wherewith to illuminate the neighbourhood, to illuminate the world. God can soon cut short our usefulness, and he will do so if we cut short our love. If the Lord be withdrawn, we can go on with our work as we used to do, but nothing will come of it: we can go on with Sunday-schools, mission-stations, branch churches, and yet accomplish nothing. Brethren, we can go on with the Orphanage, the College, the Colportage, the Evangelistic Society, the Book Fund, and all else, and yet nothing will be effected if the arm of the Lord be not made bare.

He can, if he wills, even take away from the church her very existence as a church. Ephesus is gone: nothing but ruins can be found. Rome once held a noble church of Christ, but has not her name become the symbol of antichrist? The Lord can soon take away candlesticks out of their places if the church uses her light for her own glory, and is not filled with his love. God forbid that we should fall under this condemnation! Of thy mercy, O Lord, forbid it! Let it not so happen to any one of us. Yet this may occur to us as individuals. You, dear brother or

sister, if you lose your first love, may soon lose your joy, your peace, your usefulness. You, who are now so bright, may grow dull. You, who are now so useful, may become useless. You were once an instructor of the foolish, and a teacher of babes; but if the Lord be withdrawn you will instruct nobody, you will be in the dark yourself. Alas! you may come to lose the very name of Christians, as some have done who once seemed to be burning and shining lights. They were foolish virgins, and ere long they were heard to cry, "Our lamps are gone out"! The Lord can and will take away the candlestick out of its place if we put him out of his place by a failure in our love to him.

How can I persuade you, then, better than with the warning words of my Master? My beloved, I persuade you from my very soul not to encounter these dangers, not to run these terrible risks; for as you would not wish to see either the church or your own self left without the light of God, to pine in darkness, it is needful that you abide in Christ, and go on to love him more and more.

The Saviour holds out a promise as his other persuasive. Upon this I can only dwell for a minute. It seems a very wonderful promise to me: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." Observe, those who lose their first love fall, but those who abide in love are made to stand. In contrast to the fall which took place in the paradise of God, we have man eating of the tree of life, and so living for ever. If we, through grace, overcome the common tendency to decline in love, then shall we be confirmed and settled in the favour of the Lord. By eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil we fell; by eating of the fruit of a better tree we live and stand fast for ever. Life proved true by love shall be nourished on the best of food: it shall be sustained by fruit from the garden of the Lord himself, gathered by the Saviour's own hand.

Note again, those who lose their first love wander far, they depart from God. "But," saith the Lord, "if you keep your first love you shall not wander, but you shall come into closer fellowship. I will bring you nearer to the centre. I will bring you to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God." The inner rings for those who grow in love; the centre of all joy is only to be reached by much love. We know God as we love God. We enter into his paradise as we abide in his love. What joy is here! What a reward hath love!

Then notice the mystical blessing which lies here, waiting your meditation. Do you know how we fell? The woman took of the fruit of the forbidden tree, and gave to Adam, and Adam ate and fell. The reverse is the case in the promise before us: the Second Adam takes of the divine fruit from the tree of promise, and hands it to his spouse; she eats and lives for ever. He who is the Father of the age of grace hands down to us immortal joys, which he has plucked from an unwithering tree. The reward of love is to eat the fruit of life. "We are getting into mysteries," says one. Yes, I am intentionally lifting a corner of the veil, and no more. I only mean to give you a glimpse at the promised boon. Into his innermost joys our Lord will bring us if we keep up our first love, and go from strength to strength therein. Marvellous things are locked up in the caskets whereof love holds the key. Sin set the angel with a flaming sword between us and the tree of life in the midst of the garden; but love has quenched that sword, and now the angel beckons us to come into the innermost secrets of paradise. We shall know as we are known when we love as we are loved. We shall live the life of God when we are wholly taken up with the love of God. The love of Jesus answered by our love to Jesus makes the sweetest music the heart can know. No joy on earth is equal to the bliss of being all taken up with love to Christ. If I had my choice of all the lives that I could live, I certainly would not

choose to be an emperor, nor to be a millionaire, nor to be a philosopher; for power, and wealth, and knowledge bring with them sorrow and travail; but I would choose to have nothing to do but to love my Lord Jesus— nothing, I mean, but to do all things for his sake, and out of love to him. Then I know that I should be in paradise, yea, in the midst of the paradise of God, and I should have meat to eat which is all unknown to men of the world.

Heaven on earth is abounding love to Jesus. This is the first and last of true delight— to love him who is the first and the last. To love Jesus is another name for paradise. Lord, let me know this by continual experience. “You are soaring aloft,” cries one. Yes, I own it. Oh that I could allure you to a heavenward flight upon wings of love! There is bitterness in declining love: it is a very consumption of the soul, and makes us weak, and faint, and low. But true love is the antepast of glory. See the heights, the glittering heights, the glorious heights, the everlasting hills to which the Lord of life will conduct all those who are faithful to him through the power of his Holy Spirit. See, O love, thine ultimate abode! I pray that what I have said may be blessed by the Holy Spirit to the bringing of us all nearer to the Bridegroom of our souls.

Amen.

FIFTEEN
HOLDING FAST THE FAITH

SERMON GIVEN ON FEBRUARY 5, 1888

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 2:12-13

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 34

*“And to the angel of the church in Pergamos
write; These things saith he which hath the
sharp sword with two edges; I know thy
works, and where thou dwellest, even where
Satan’s seat is: and thou holdest fast my
name, and hast not denied my faith.”*

REVELATION 2:12-13.

YOUR attention will be principally asked to these words—
“Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith.”

Specially note, dear friends, at the opening of this morning’s meditation, the character under which the Lord Jesus Christ presents himself to the church at Pergamos. “These

things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges.” Does the Lord Jesus come to his church in that way? Does he at the door of the church bear a sword? a sword unsheathed? a sharp sword? a sharp sword with two edges? Yes, even to his visible church this is how our Lord Jesus Christ appears. To his own spiritual and faithful ones he is to each one a husband, full of unutterable tenderness and love; but to the visible church, which at its best estate is never altogether pure, he appears in severer form. To a church he comes as Captain of the Lord’s host, and he wields a sharp sword with two edges. It is the parallel of that passage where John the Baptist saith of him: “His fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and he will gather his wheat into his garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” That winnowing fan is never out of his hand, for it is always needed. Even though our Lord is full of grace, he is also full of truth. His love to his servants manifests itself in a burning jealousy which will not endure evil. “He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver.” We think of the coming of our Lord as a joy and a blessing; but, oh, remember that question, “But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?” The Lord bears the sword, and he beareth it not in vain. Time has not blunted its edge, it is “sharp and it hath two edges, as of old.

But what will he do with that sword in reference to a church? We are not left in any doubt upon that point. Having mentioned some whose doctrines and lives were unclean, the Lord says, “Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.” He turns the sword against those within the church who had no right to be there. It is no trifling thing to be a church member. I could earnestly wish that certain professors had never been members

of a church at all; for if they had been outside the church, they might have been in far less peril than they are within its bounds. Outside their conduct might have been tolerated; but it is not consistent with an avowal of discipleship towards Jesus. I say this with deep sorrow. O false professors, you may go down to hell readily enough without increasing your damnation by coming into Christ's church with a lie in your right hand. Alas for those who are not Christians in heart, and yet profess to be so! Such ought to be startled by the vision of the Lord himself drawing near to a church with a sharp sword in his hand. Surely, "The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites."

Yet is there comfort to the sincere in this glorious man of war. He will smite those who are the enemies of his holy cause, but he will also beat off those who attack his people from without. His sword is for the defence of the faithful. It is drawn from its sheath to protect the timid and the trembling. Jesus is come as our Joshua, to chase the enemy before us, and lead us onward, conquering and to conquer. The sword with two edges is the defender of the least of those whose hearts are right before the Lord. I introduce the subject as the Spirit himself introduces it. I would make the sermon sweet to the saints, but the preface must needs be sharp, lest any seize upon comforts to which they have no right. The Paschal Lamb is always to be eaten with bitter herbs: those bitter herbs I have set upon the table. The name of Jesus, which is the song of angels and the treasure of saints, has terror in it to those who refuse him; for he who bears that name shall judge the quick and dead, and pronounce condemnation on the unrighteous.

Notice that this blessed Saviour watches his church with an observant eye. He looks at the church in Pergamos, and he says, "I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is." The Lord sees the position and the peril of the

church at Pergamos, "where Satan dwelleth." Probably there were horrible idolatries, with obscene orgies in the city, or it may have been a place of peculiar licentiousness, or of special persecution. We cannot at this distance of time exactly tell what it was; but the Lord regarded it as the citadel of Satan. There are places in the world at this day where sin has so much the upper hand, or where error and unbelief reign so supreme, that the devil would seem to have there taken up his residence, and to have made it his capital city. This is a trying neighborhood for a church of Christ, and yet it is the place where it is most wanted. You, dear friend, may be living in society where the evil one rules with undisputed sway. You are not favoured to dwell with your fellow Christians, but you go home to be met with blasphemies at the door; and all the week sights and sounds assail your eyes and ears which make you feel like Lot in Sodom. I am sorry for you; but let it comfort you that your Lord knows all about it, and he can either remove you from the trying position, or else he can still more glorify his grace by supporting you in it, and enabling you to overcome the enemy. He knows that "Satan desires to have you, that he may sift you as wheat"; and he prays for you that your faith fail not. He knows your perils, and he considers your trials. Right well he perceives the way in which Satan would first mislead you, and then accuse you. The subtlety of the old serpent he understands. He sees your struggles, your failures, and your desperate endeavours to hold fast the faith. He knows how at night you are grieved as you make confession before him of your shortcomings; but he knows also the peculiar circumstances in which you are placed, and he judges you in great mercy. If you are holding fast his name and have not denied the faith, even that may be to him a surer proof of your truthfulness of heart than works of labour and patience might be in other instances. You have borne fewer clusters than another vine, but

Jesus knows that you grow in a very barren bit of ground, and he thinks well of your little fruit. Your day's work does not look much when it is done, but when horses plough a rock so hard that it breaks the ploughshare, no husbandman expects so much to be done as when a light loam has to be gently turned over. The Lord Jesus takes all our surroundings into consideration, and though he loves us too well to make excuse for our sins, yet he himself mentions the circumstances which make our act to be rather failure than fault, even as he did for the first disciples when he found them asleep, and he said, "The spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak." O dear children of God, if you are placed in positions of peculiar trial and difficulty, and if your hindrances are so many that you cannot accomplish one-tenth as much as you desire, then hear how Jesus puts it: "I know where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is." If you are faithful to your Lord, and firm in his truth, he will commend you and say, "Yet thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith." I wonder whether this word of comfort is meant for somebody here, or for some friend who will read the sermon. I feel that it must be so. Many of our Lord's beloved ones are, in God's sight, now doing much more, under distressing circumstances, than they used to do in happier days. When they had ten pounds entrusted to them, they brought in two by way of interest; and now that they have only one pound, they bring in one pound of interest: thus you see that they produce a far larger percentage than they used to do; and this is the Lord's way of calculating, for it is according to righteousness. When we have little strength, and are placed in positions of great difficulty, then the Lord thinks all the more of what we produce, and regards it as all the surer proof of fidelity. In the text it is commendation enough for Pergamos, under the circumstances that, dwelling so close to Beelzebub's own capital, close under the shadow of the throne of hell, that

church could earn this praise: “Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith.”

Let us give earnest attention to this commendation. Oh, that we may earn it ourselves; and if we have already earned it, may we be helped by the Holy Spirit to hold it fast, so that no man take our crown!

I. The first head will be, **LET US CONSIDER THIS FACT.** I hope it is a fact with many here present as surely as it was a fact with Pergamos. I trust it can be said of this church and of its members — “Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith.”

Notice, dear friends, that the name of Christ is here made to be identical with the faith of Christ. “Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith.” The faith of Scripture has Christ for its centre, Christ for its circumference, and Christ for its substance. The name— that is, the person, the character, the work, the teaching of Christ— this is the faith of Christians. The great doctrines of the gospel are all intimately connected with the Lord Jesus Christ himself: they are the rays, and he is the sun. We never hold the faith correctly except as we see the Lord Jesus to be the centre of it. From our election onward to our glorification, Christ is all and in all. To the Jews the law was never in its proper place until it was laid in the ark, and covered with the mercy seat; and I am sure believers never see the law aright till they see it fulfilled in Christ Jesus. If it be so with the law, how much more is it so with the gospel? The gospel is the gold ring, but Christ Jesus is the diamond which is set in it. Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith: he is the sum and substance, the top and bottom of it. When we hold fast the name of our Lord, then we have not denied the faith.

But how may the faith be denied? In several ways this may be done. Let me say it very tenderly, but very solemnly, some deny the faith, and let go the name of Jesus by never confessing

it. Remember how the Lord puts this matter in the gospels: "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God; but he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God." Here it is clear that to deny is the same thing as not confessing. I know people who almost boast of their neutrality. They say, "I hold my tongue. Though the conflict should lie between Christ and Belial, yet I would go quietly on and never involve myself." Say you so? Then permit me to remind you of our Lord's own words. "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." Again he says, "Whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple." This text must bear hard upon those who have tried not exactly to hold with the hare and run with the hounds, but neither to hold with the hare nor yet to run with the hounds. These have hoped to find in their discretion the better part of valour; but, believe me, it is a valour which will be rewarded with everlasting contempt. This way you hope to lead an easy life. An easy life of such a kind will end in a very uneasy death. A life in which we have shunned the cross of Christ will lead to a state in which we shall miss the crown of glory.

Christ is also denied by false doctrine. If we espouse error as to his person, work, or doctrine, and believe what Jesus did not teach, and refuse to believe what Jesus did teach, then we have denied his name and his faith. One of the main points of a Christian, without which the rest of his life will not be acceptable with God, is that Jesus shall be to him "the way, the truth, and the life." The practical, the doctrinal, the experimental must all be found by us in Jesus Christ our Lord, or else we have not placed him in his right position; and we cannot be right anywhere unless the centre is right, and unless Jesus is that centre. God grant that we may never turn aside from the

faith once for all delivered to the saints; but may we resist all false philosophies, steadfast and immovable!

But then it is very possible to deny the name and the faith by unholy living. Let none of us imagine that an orthodox creed can be of any use to us if we lead a heterodox life. No, Christ Jesus is to be obeyed as a Master, as well as to be believed as a Teacher. The disciple is to be practically obedient, as well as attentively teachable. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." The apostle Paul somewhere says, "He that careth not for his own household hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel (or unbeliever)"; so that a moral fault may be a denial of the faith, and may make a man worse than if he had never professed to believe at all. God save us from an unholy life!

Alas! we can deny the faith by actually forsaking it, and quitting the people of God. Some do so deliberately, and others because the charms of the world overcome them. We are told of some who went away from our Lord because of what he had taught. They cried, "This is a hard saying; who can hear it?" My friends, if you are not prepared to accept hard sayings, you need not profess to be disciples of Jesus. "Horrible doctrine!" cried one the other day. Granted that it is horrible, may it not also be true? Many horrible things take place around us, and yet none can deny the facts. You cannot exclude from your knowledge many things which are true, by merely crying, "Horrible!" It is not ours to judge of our Lord's teaching by our sentiment, we are to receive it by faith. He speaks terribly of the doom of the wicked, and he is not capable of exaggeration. What the Lord Jesus says is certain, for "he is the faithful and true witness," and therefore we will not turn from him, whatever his teaching may be. Oh for grace to persevere to the end! Oh for fidelity and constancy, so that neither gain nor loss, exaltation nor depression, may induce us to quit our Saviour! Let us hold fast his sacred name, and never deny the faith, come what

may. May the Holy Spirit hold us fast, that we may hold fast the name of Jesus!

In what way may we be said to hold fast the name of Christ and the faith of Christ? I answer, by the full consent of our intellect, yielding up our mind to consider and accept the things which are assuredly believed among us. We hold fast the form of sound words, and accept whatsoever God has revealed, because he has revealed it. Our motto is, "Let God be true, but every man a liar." When Christ speaks, we assent with our minds and consent with our hearts to all he declares.

If we hold fast the name of Jesus, we must hold the faith in the love of it. We must store up in our affections all that our Lord teaches. His words are found, and we do eat them, they are as honey to the taste. Let Jesus speak, and I will reply, "Yea, Lord, thou sayest it is so, and I know it is so. I consent to thy teaching, and from my soul I love thee, and accept all that thou dost reveal." For the doctrines revealed in Holy Scripture the true believer would live or die. This love of the heart is that which causes us to hold fast the name of Christ.

We also hold it fast by holding it forth in the teeth of all opposition. We must confess the faith at all proper times and seasons, and we must never hide our colours. There are times when we must dash to the front and court the encounter, when we see that our Captain's honour demands it. Let us never be either ashamed or afraid. Our Lord Jesus deserves that we should yield ourselves as willing sacrifices in defence of his faith. Ease, reputation, life itself, must go for the name and faith of Jesus. If in the heat of the battle our good name or our life must be risked to win the victory, then let us say, "In this battle some of us must fall; why should not I? I will take part and lot with my Master, and bear reproach for his sake." Only brave soldiers are worthy of our great Lord. Those who sneak into the rear, that they may be comfortable, are not worthy of the king-

dom. What will our Captain say of cowards in that day when he distributes rewards to his faithful ones? Brethren, we must be willing to bear ridicule for Christ's sake, even that peculiarly envenomed ridicule which "the cultured" are so apt to pour upon us. We must be willing to be thought great fools for Jesus' sake. Some of us have forgotten more than many of our opponents ever knew, and yet they style us ignorant; we are bearing shame because we have the courage of our convictions, and yet they call us cowards. For my part, I am willing to be ten thousand fools in one for my dear Lord and Master, and count it to be the highest honour that can be put upon me to be stripped of every honour, and loaded with every censure for the sake of the grand old truth which is written on my very heart. Those ships which sail with Jesus as their Lord High Admiral must look for tempests; for his barque was filled with the waves, and began to sink. Doth that man love his Lord who would be willing to see Jesus wearing a crown of thorns, while for himself he craves a chaplet of laurel? Shall Jesus ascend to his throne by the cross, and do we expect to be carried there on the shoulders of applauding crowds? Be not so vain in your imagination. Count you the cost, and if you are not willing to bear Christ's cross, go away to your farm and to your merchandise, and make the most of them; only let me whisper this in your ear, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

II. In the second place, having considered the fact, LET US FURTHER ENLARGE UPON IT.

What do we mean by holding fast the name of Christ? I reply, first, we mean holding fast the Deity of that name. We believe in our Lord's real Godhead. "His name shall be called Wonderful, counsellor, the mighty God." One of the names by which he is revealed to us is Immanuel. The word "El" is one of the great Oriental names of God. You get in Hebrew Elohim, and in Arabic "Allah." Our Lord Jesus is Immanu-el, that is,

God with us; and we believe him to be so. He is as truly man as any one among us; born of a virgin without taint of original sin. But he is also most surely God without the least diminution of the perfections and glories of Godhead. We put our finger into the print of the nails, but as we do .so we cry, "My Lord, and my God." "Let all the angels of God worship him." "At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." We can never give up our belief in the Godhead of our Lord Jesus, but we must and will hold fast the faith of the Deity of Christ.

We also hold fast the name of Jesus, and the faith of Jesus, as to the royalty of his name. He was born King of the Jews, and he is also "King of kings, and Lord of lords." That which Pilate wrote over his cross is true—"Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews"; but God also hath highly exalted him, and made him to have dominion over all the works of his hands. The Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son. He shall put down all rule, and all authority and power, for he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. "The Lord shall reign for ever and ever: Hallelujah"! When we bow the knee in prayer, and say, "Thy kingdom come," we mean the kingdom of God, and we mean also the kingdom of Christ Jesus, He it is that as a Lamb is seen in the midst of the throne where saints and angels pay adoring homage. Soon shall the seventh angel sound his trumpet, and great voices shall be heard in heaven saying, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever." O Jesus, we bow before thee! "Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints." He reigns in our hearts over the triple kingdom of our nature. He is King in our families; we desire to see him King in this city, King in this nation, King over all the earth; and we

shall never be satisfied till, with all the redeemed of our race, we crown him Lord of all. We hold fast the royalty of the name of Jesus Christ.

Moreover, we believe in the grandeur of that name, as being the first and the last. Open the New Testament, and read the first verse of Matthew. How does it begin? "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David." The book of the New Covenant begins with Jesus. Now look at the last verse, see how the Testament ends: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." Jesus Christ appears in the first verse, and he appears in the last verse. Did he not say, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending"? The first line of the covenant of grace is Jesus Christ; the last line of the covenant of grace is Jesus Christ; and all in between is the Lord Jesus Christ. Begin with him as A, go right through to B, C, D, E, F, and so on till you end with Z, and it is all Christ Jesus. He is all; yea, he is all in all. Oh what blessings have come to us through Jesus Christ! Through his name we have received remission of sins, in his name we are justified, in his name we are sanctified, in his name we shall be glorified, even as in him we were chosen from before the foundation of the world. My tongue can never tell you even the commencement of his greatness. Who shall declare his generation? The fringe, the hem of his infinite glories, who can touch? He is unspeakable. As for his glory, I may say, "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens." All glory and honour be unto him in whom are comprehended all the blessings whereby God hath enriched his people in time and in eternity.

We hold fast the name of Christ as we believe in its saving power. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins." We hold fast the belief that Jesus saves us from the guilt of sin by having borne it in his own body on

the tree. We are assured that he makes us just before God by that righteousness of his, which is ours, because we are one with him. He saves us from the punishment of sin because "the chastisement of our peace was upon him." He died as a victim in our stead. He saves us from the power of sin by his Spirit, and by faith in his death: we overcome sin by the blood of the Lamb. Salvation in every department, salvation from its hopeful dawning to its glorious noontide in perfection, is all of Christ Jesus. He is Saviour, and he alone. "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." He is the unique Saviour, there is no other possible salvation now or in the world to come. Believest thou in Christ? Then thou hast salvation. "But he that believeth not shall be damned." Pronounce the word hard or soft as thou wilt, it will come to the same thing in the end— thou shalt be condemned, and condemned hopelessly, if thou believest not in Jesus Christ, the one sole propitiation for the sins of men. This we hold fast. I know you are established in these truths, my beloved, and you mean to hold them as long as you breathe, and not to deny the faith which the Lord himself has delivered to you.

Once more, we hold fast this name in its immutability. We are told to-day that this is an age of progress, and therefore we must accept an improved gospel. Every man is to be his own lawyer, and every man his own saviour. We are getting on in the direction of every man putting away his own sin, just as every chimney should consume its own smoke. But, dear friends, we do not believe these idle dreams. We want no new gospel, no modern salvation. Our conviction is that Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." The way that Paul went to heaven is good enough for me.

"The way the holy prophets went,

The road that leads from banishment,”

is broad enough and safe enough for me. When I remember my dear brethren and sisters in Christ who have fallen asleep, whom I saw die with triumph lighting up their faces, I feel quite content with the salvation which saved them, and I am not going to try experiments or speculations. To talk of improving upon our perfect Saviour is to insult him. He is God's propitiation; what would you more? My blood boils with indignation at the idea of improving the gospel. There is but one Saviour, and that one Saviour is the same for ever. His doctrine is the same in every age, and is not yea and nay. What a strange result we should obtain in the general assembly of heaven if some were saved by the gospel of the first century, and others by the gospel of the second, and others by the gospel of the seventeenth, and others by the gospel of the nineteenth century! We should need a different song of praise for the clients of these various periods, and the mingled chorus would be rather to the glory of man's culture than to the praise of the one Lord. No such mottled heaven, and no such discordant song, shall ever be produced. There is one church and one Saviour. We believe in one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. To eternal glory there is but one way; to walk therein we must hold fast one truth, and be quickened by one life. We stand fast by the unaltered, unalterable, eternal name of Jesus Christ our Lord. This is what we mean by holding fast the name and the faith of Jesus.

III. Thirdly, dear friends, to lead you a step further in the same road, LET ME SHOW THE PRACTICAL PLACE OF THE NAME AND OF THE FAITH WITH US.

The practical place of it is this: first of all, it is our personal comfort—

*"Jesus, the name that charms our fears,
That bids our sorrows cease;
'Tis music in the sinner's ears,
'Tis life, and health, and peace."*

The faith which we hold is our daily and hourly joy and hope. The doctrines which I believe in connection with the divine Person in whom I trust are the pillow of my weariness, the anodyne of my care, the rest of my spirit. Jesus gives me a look-out for years to come which is celestial, and at the same time I can look back with thankfulness on the years which are past. For all time the Lord Jesus is our heart's content. Nothing can separate us from his love, and therefore nothing can deprive us of our confident hope. Through this blessed name and this blessed faith believers are themselves made glad and strong. On the name of Jesus we feed, and in that name we wrap ourselves. It is strength for our weakness, yea, life for our death.

And then, dear friends, this name, this faith, these are our message. Our only business here below is to cry, "Behold the Lamb." Are any of you sent of God with any other message? It cannot be. The one message which God has given to his people to proclaim is salvation through the Lamb—salvation by the blood of Jesus. It is by his blood that cleansing comes to the polluted. He is the one great Propitiation. To tell of Jesus is our occupation, we have nothing to say which is not comprised in the revelation made to us by God in Christ Jesus. He who is our one comfort is also our one theme.

He also is our divine authority for holy work. We preach the gospel in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. If we preached it in any other name men would have a right to reject it. If the spiritually sick are healed, it is his name which makes them strong. If devils flee before us, we cast them out in his name.

Oh, that we did more often remember that all our teaching and preaching must be done in the name of Jesus! In his name we gather for worship, in his name we go forth to service. If we go in our own name we go in vain; but if we are ambassadors for God, as though he did beseech men by us, then we pray them in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God, and we are hopeful that our labour will not be in vain in the Lord.

This also is our power in preaching; indeed, it is our power, our only power in living before God. Brethren, the devil will never be cast out by any other name — let us hold it fast. If we conjure by eloquence, talent, music, or what not, the evil one will say, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?” It is only his name that makes the legions of hell quit the bosoms of the possessed, and fly howling down into the deep. This is the name high over all; but there is none other which hath such power in it. Spiritual diseases, yea, death itself, will yield to this name. It is his name that makes Lazarus come forth from the grave, and the young man sit upright on the bier. Use this name, and nothing can stand before you.

I said that it is our power in life, and so, indeed, it is. When we draw near to God, what is our strength wherewith to prevail in prayer? Is it not that we ask in the name of Jesus? If you leave out the name of Jesus, what are your prayers but a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal? Prayer without the name of Jesus has no wings with which to fly up to God. This is that golden ladder whereby we climb up to the throne of God, and take unspeakably precious things out of the hand of the Eternal. That name prevaieth with God concerning everything, and so enables us to prevail with man; wherefore, hold it fast, and deny not the faith; for what can you do if the truth and the name of Jesus be given up?

This name is our one hope of victory. As Constantine, in his dream, saw the cross, and took it for his emblem, with the

motto, "By this sign I conquer," so to-day our only hope of victory for the gospel is that the cross of Christ displays it, and the name of Jesus is in it. His name is named on us, and in his name we will cast out devils, and do many mighty works, till his name shall be known and honoured wherever the sun pursues his course, or the moon cheers the watches of the night.

III. Now, in closing, I will URGE REASONS FOR HOLDING FAST THE NAME AND FAITH OF JESUS. I hope we hold it so fast that we can never give it up while reason holds its throne. There is an old Christian legend concerning Ignatius, that he never spoke without mentioning the name of Jesus whom he loved. His speech seemed saturated with love to his Lord, and when he died the name of Jesus was found to be stamped on his heart. It may not have been so literally, but no doubt it was true spiritually. The name of Jesus is, I hope, written in our hearts so as to be inseparable from our lives. Whatever else may go, the name of Jesus can never depart from our thoughts. Dying men have been known to forget everything but this. The man has forgotten his wife, his children, his bosom friend, and has turned away oblivious from them all, as if they were strangers; and yet when the name of Jesus has been whispered in his ear, his eyes have brightened, and his countenance has responded to that precious name. O memory, leave no other name than his recorded upon thy tablets! Happy forgetfulness which clears all else away, but leaves that name in solitary glory!

That it may be so I will put the question thus: Why should we give up the faith? I fail to see a reason. Why should I change my belief, or cease to hold fast the name of Christ Jesus my Lord? It is an irrational suggestion. "I am open to conviction," said a man who knew his ground, "I am open to conviction, but I should like to see the man that could convince me." I am in very much the same condition with regard to the gospel of my

Lord Jesus: I am open to conviction, but I shall never see the man that can convince me out of my experience, my conviction, my consciousness, my hope, my all. Before I could quit my faith in the substitutionary work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and my confidence in the everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure, I should have to be ground to powder, and every separate atom transformed.

What would they give us in exchange for the faith? That is a question which it is easy to ask, but impossible to answer. Suppose the doctrines of grace could be obliterated, and our hope could be taken away, what would they give us in the place of them, either for this life or the next? I have never seen anything proposed in the place of the gospel that was worth considering for a second. Have you? Uncertainty, doubt, glitter, mockery, darkness— all these; but who wants them? They offer us either bubbles or filth, according to the different shade of the speculator's character; but we are not enamoured of either. We prefer gold to dross.

We must defend the faith; for what would have become of us if our fathers had not maintained it? If confessors, reformers, martyrs, and covenanters had been recreant to the name and faith of Jesus, where would have been the churches of to-day? Must we not play the man as they did? If we do not, are we not censuring our fathers? It is very pretty, is it not, to read of Luther and his brave deeds? Of course, everybody admires Luther! Yes, yes; but you do not want any one else to do the same to-day. When you go to the Zoological Gardens you all admire the bear; but how would you like a bear at home, or a bear wandering loose about the street? You tell me that it would be unbearable, and no doubt you are right. So, we admire a man who was firm in the faith, say four hundred years ago; the past ages are a sort of bear-pit or iron cage for him; but such a man to-day is a nuisance, and must be put down. Call him a narrow-

minded bigot, or give him a worse name if you can think of one. Yet imagine that in those ages past, Luther, Zwingle, Calvin, and their compeers had said, "The world is out of order; but if we try to set it right we shall only make a great row, and get ourselves into disgrace. Let us go to our chambers, put on our night-caps, and sleep over the bad times, and perhaps when we wake up things will have grown better." Such conduct on their part would have entailed upon us a heritage of error. Age after age would have gone down into the infernal deeps, and the pestiferous bogs of error would have swallowed all. These men loved the faith and the name of Jesus too well to see them trampled on. Note what we owe them, and let us pay to our sons the debt we owe our fathers. It is to-day as it was in the Reformers' days. Decision is needed. Here is the day for the man, where is the man for the day? We who have had the gospel passed to us by martyr hands dare not trifle with it, nor sit by and hear it denied by traitors, who pretend to love it, but inwardly abhor every line of it. The faith I hold bears upon it marks of the blood of my ancestors. Shall I deny their faith, for which they left their native land to sojourn here? Shall we cast away the treasure which was handed to us through the bars of prisons, or came to us charred with the flames of Smithfield? Personally, when my bones have been tortured with rheumatism, I have remembered Job Spurgeon, doubtless of my own stock, who in Chelmsford Jail was allowed a chair, because he could not lie down by reason of rheumatic pain. That Quaker's broad-brim overshadows my brow. Perhaps I inherit his rheumatism; but that I do not regret if I have his stubborn faith, which will not let me yield a syllable of the truth of God. When I think of how others have suffered for the faith, a little scorn or unkindness seems a mere trifle, not worthy of mention. An ancestry of lovers of the faith ought to be a great plea with us to abide by the Lord God of our fathers, and the faith in which they lived.

As for me, I must hold the old gospel: I can do no other. God helping me, I will endure the consequences of what men think obstinacy.

Look you, sirs, there are ages yet to come. If the Lord does not speedily appear, there will come another generation, and another, and all these generations will be tainted and injured if we are not faithful to God and to his truth to-day. We have come to a turning-point in the road. If we turn to the right, mayhap our children and our children's children will go that way; but if we turn to the left, generations yet unborn will curse our names for having been unfaithful to God and to his Word. I charge you, not only by your ancestry, but by your posterity, that you seek to win the commendation of your Master, that though you dwell where Satan's seat is, you yet hold fast his name, and do not deny his faith. God grant us faithfulness, for the sake of the souls around us! How is the world to be saved if the church is false to her Lord? How are we to lift the masses if our fulcrum is removed? If our gospel is uncertain, what remains but increasing misery and despair? Stand fast, my beloved, in the name of God! I, your brother in Christ, entreat you to abide in the truth. Quit yourselves like men, be strong. The Lord sustain you for Jesus' sake.

Amen.

REVELATION 3

SIXTEEN
A SOLEMN WARNING FOR ALL
CHURCHES

SERMON GIVEN ON FEBRUARY 5, 1888

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 2:12-13

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 34

*“And to the angel of the church in Pergamos
write; These things saith he which hath the
sharp sword with two edges; I know thy
works, and where thou dwellest, even where
Satan’s seat is: and thou holdest fast my
name, and hast not denied my faith.”*

REVELATION 2:12-13

YOUR attention will be principally asked to these words—
“Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith.”

Specially note, dear friends, at the opening of this morning’s meditation, the character under which the Lord Jesus Christ presents himself to the church at Pergamos. “These

things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges.” Does the Lord Jesus come to his church in that way? Does he at the door of the church bear a sword? a sword unsheathed? a sharp sword? a sharp sword with two edges? Yes, even to his visible church this is how our Lord Jesus Christ appears. To his own spiritual and faithful ones he is to each one a husband, full of unutterable tenderness and love; but to the visible church, which at its best estate is never altogether pure, he appears in severer form. To a church he comes as Captain of the Lord’s host, and he wields a sharp sword with two edges. It is the parallel of that passage where John the Baptist saith of him: “His fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and he will gather his wheat into his garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” That winnowing fan is never out of his hand, for it is always needed. Even though our Lord is full of grace, he is also full of truth. His love to his servants manifests itself in a burning jealousy which will not endure evil. “He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver.” We think of the coming of our Lord as a joy and a blessing; but, oh, remember that question, “But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?” The Lord bears the sword, and he beareth it not in vain. Time has not blunted its edge, it is “sharp and it hath two edges, as of old.

But what will he do with that sword in reference to a church? We are not left in any doubt upon that point. Having mentioned some whose doctrines and lives were unclean, the Lord says, “Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.” He turns the sword against those within the church who had no right to be there. It is no trifling thing to be a church member. I could earnestly wish that certain professors had never been members

of a church at all; for if they had been outside the church, they might have been in far less peril than they are within its bounds. Outside their conduct might have been tolerated; but it is not consistent with an avowal of discipleship towards Jesus. I say this with deep sorrow. O false professors, you may go down to hell readily enough without increasing your damnation by coming into Christ's church with a lie in your right hand. Alas for those who are not Christians in heart, and yet profess to be so! Such ought to be startled by the vision of the Lord himself drawing near to a church with a sharp sword in his hand. Surely, "The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites."

Yet is there comfort to the sincere in this glorious man of war. He will smite those who are the enemies of his holy cause, but he will also beat off those who attack his people from without. His sword is for the defence of the faithful. It is drawn from its sheath to protect the timid and the trembling. Jesus is come as our Joshua, to chase the enemy before us, and lead us onward, conquering and to conquer. The sword with two edges is the defender of the least of those whose hearts are right before the Lord. I introduce the subject as the Spirit himself introduces it. I would make the sermon sweet to the saints, but the preface must needs be sharp, lest any seize upon comforts to which they have no right. The Paschal Lamb is always to be eaten with bitter herbs: those bitter herbs I have set upon the table. The name of Jesus, which is the song of angels and the treasure of saints, has terror in it to those who refuse him; for he who bears that name shall judge the quick and dead, and pronounce condemnation on the unrighteous.

Notice that this blessed Saviour watches his church with an observant eye. He looks at the church in Pergamos, and he says, "I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is." The Lord sees the position and the peril of the

church at Pergamos, “where Satan dwelleth.” Probably there were horrible idolatries, with obscene orgies in the city, or it may have been a place of peculiar licentiousness, or of special persecution. We cannot at this distance of time exactly tell what it was; but the Lord regarded it as the citadel of Satan. There are places in the world at this day where sin has so much the upper hand, or where error and unbelief reign so supreme, that the devil would seem to have there taken up his residence, and to have made it his capital city. This is a trying neighborhood for a church of Christ, and yet it is the place where it is most wanted. You, dear friend, may be living in society where the evil one rules with undisputed sway. You are not favoured to dwell with your fellow Christians, but you go home to be met with blasphemies at the door; and all the week sights and sounds assail your eyes and ears which make you feel like Lot in Sodom. I am sorry for you; but let it comfort you that your Lord knows all about it, and he can either remove you from the trying position, or else he can still more glorify his grace by supporting you in it, and enabling you to overcome the enemy. He knows that “Satan desires to have you, that he may sift you as wheat”; and he prays for you that your faith fail not. He knows your perils, and he considers your trials. Right well he perceives the way in which Satan would first mislead you, and then accuse you. The subtlety of the old serpent he understands. He sees your struggles, your failures, and your desperate endeavours to hold fast the faith. He knows how at night you are grieved as you make confession before him of your shortcomings; but he knows also the peculiar circumstances in which you are placed, and he judges you in great mercy. If you are holding fast his name and have not denied the faith, even that may be to him a surer proof of your truthfulness of heart than works of labour and patience might be in other instances. You have borne fewer clusters than another vine, but

Jesus knows that you grow in a very barren bit of ground, and he thinks well of your little fruit. Your day's work does not look much when it is done, but when horses plough a rock so hard that it breaks the ploughshare, no husbandman expects so much to be done as when a light loam has to be gently turned over. The Lord Jesus takes all our surroundings into consideration, and though he loves us too well to make excuse for our sins, yet he himself mentions the circumstances which make our act to be rather failure than fault, even as he did for the first disciples when he found them asleep, and he said, "The spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak." O dear children of God, if you are placed in positions of peculiar trial and difficulty, and if your hindrances are so many that you cannot accomplish one-tenth as much as you desire, then hear how Jesus puts it: "I know where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is." If you are faithful to your Lord, and firm in his truth, he will commend you and say, "Yet thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith." I wonder whether this word of comfort is meant for somebody here, or for some friend who will read the sermon. I feel that it must be so. Many of our Lord's beloved ones are, in God's sight, now doing much more, under distressing circumstances, than they used to do in happier days. When they had ten pounds entrusted to them, they brought in two by way of interest; and now that they have only one pound, they bring in one pound of interest: thus you see that they produce a far larger percentage than they used to do; and this is the Lord's way of calculating, for it is according to righteousness. When we have little strength, and are placed in positions of great difficulty, then the Lord thinks all the more of what we produce, and regards it as all the surer proof of fidelity. In the text it is commendation enough for Pergamos, under the circumstances that, dwelling so close to Beelzebub's own capital, close under the shadow of the throne of hell, that

church could earn this praise: “Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith.”

Let us give earnest attention to this commendation. Oh, that we may earn it ourselves; and if we have already earned it, may we be helped by the Holy Spirit to hold it fast, so that no man take our crown!

I. The first head will be, LET US CONSIDER THIS FACT. I hope it is a fact with many here present as surely as it was a fact with Pergamos. I trust it can be said of this church and of its members — “Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith.”

Notice, dear friends, that the name of Christ is here made to be identical with the faith of Christ. “Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith.” The faith of Scripture has Christ for its centre, Christ for its circumference, and Christ for its substance. The name— that is, the person, the character, the work, the teaching of Christ— this is the faith of Christians. The great doctrines of the gospel are all intimately connected with the Lord Jesus Christ himself: they are the rays, and he is the sun. We never hold the faith correctly except as we see the Lord Jesus to be the centre of it. From our election onward to our glorification, Christ is all and in all. To the Jews the law was never in its proper place until it was laid in the ark, and covered with the mercy seat; and I am sure believers never see the law aright till they see it fulfilled in Christ Jesus. If it be so with the law, how much more is it so with the gospel? The gospel is the gold ring, but Christ Jesus is the diamond which is set in it. Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith: he is the sum and substance, the top and bottom of it. When we hold fast the name of our Lord, then we have not denied the faith.

But how may the faith be denied? In several ways this may be done. Let me say it very tenderly, but very solemnly, some deny the faith, and let go the name of Jesus by never confessing

it. Remember how the Lord puts this matter in the gospels: "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God; but he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God." Here it is clear that to deny is the same thing as not confessing. I know people who almost boast of their neutrality. They say, "I hold my tongue. Though the conflict should lie between Christ and Belial, yet I would go quietly on and never involve myself." Say you so? Then permit me to remind you of our Lord's own words. "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." Again he says, "Whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple." This text must bear hard upon those who have tried not exactly to hold with the hare and run with the hounds, but neither to hold with the hare nor yet to run with the hounds. These have hoped to find in their discretion the better part of valour; but, believe me, it is a valour which will be rewarded with everlasting contempt. This way you hope to lead an easy life. An easy life of such a kind will end in a very uneasy death. A life in which we have shunned the cross of Christ will lead to a state in which we shall miss the crown of glory.

Christ is also denied by false doctrine. If we espouse error as to his person, work, or doctrine, and believe what Jesus did not teach, and refuse to believe what Jesus did teach, then we have denied his name and his faith. One of the main points of a Christian, without which the rest of his life will not be acceptable with God, is that Jesus shall be to him "the way, the truth, and the life." The practical, the doctrinal, the experimental must all be found by us in Jesus Christ our Lord, or else we have not placed him in his right position; and we cannot be right anywhere unless the centre is right, and unless Jesus is that centre. God grant that we may never turn aside from the

faith once for all delivered to the saints; but may we resist all false philosophies, steadfast and immovable!

But then it is very possible to deny the name and the faith by unholy living. Let none of us imagine that an orthodox creed can be of any use to us if we lead a heterodox life. No, Christ Jesus is to be obeyed as a Master, as well as to be believed as a Teacher. The disciple is to be practically obedient, as well as attentively teachable. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." The apostle Paul somewhere says, "He that careth not for his own household hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel (or unbeliever)"; so that a moral fault may be a denial of the faith, and may make a man worse than if he had never professed to believe at all. God save us from an unholy life!

Alas! we can deny the faith by actually forsaking it, and quitting the people of God. Some do so deliberately, and others because the charms of the world overcome them. We are told of some who went away from our Lord because of what he had taught. They cried, "This is a hard saying; who can hear it?" My friends, if you are not prepared to accept hard sayings, you need not profess to be disciples of Jesus. "Horrible doctrine!" cried one the other day. Granted that it is horrible, may it not also be true? Many horrible things take place around us, and yet none can deny the facts. You cannot exclude from your knowledge many things which are true, by merely crying, "Horrible!" It is not ours to judge of our Lord's teaching by our sentiment, we are to receive it by faith. He speaks terribly of the doom of the wicked, and he is not capable of exaggeration. What the Lord Jesus says is certain, for "he is the faithful and true witness," and therefore we will not turn from him, whatever his teaching may be. Oh for grace to persevere to the end! Oh for fidelity and constancy, so that neither gain nor loss, exaltation nor depression, may induce us to quit our Saviour! Let us hold fast his sacred name, and never deny the faith, come what

may. May the Holy Spirit hold us fast, that we may hold fast the name of Jesus!

In what way may we be said to hold fast the name of Christ and the faith of Christ? I answer, by the full consent of our intellect, yielding up our mind to consider and accept the things which are assuredly believed among us. We hold fast the form of sound words, and accept whatsoever God has revealed, because he has revealed it. Our motto is, "Let God be true, but every man a liar." When Christ speaks, we assent with our minds and consent with our hearts to all he declares.

If we hold fast the name of Jesus, we must hold the faith in the love of it. We must store up in our affections all that our Lord teaches. His words are found, and we do eat them, they are as honey to the taste. Let Jesus speak, and I will reply, "Yea, Lord, thou sayest it is so, and I know it is so. I consent to thy teaching, and from my soul I love thee, and accept all that thou dost reveal." For the doctrines revealed in Holy Scripture the true believer would live or die. This love of the heart is that which causes us to hold fast the name of Christ.

We also hold it fast by holding it forth in the teeth of all opposition. We must confess the faith at all proper times and seasons, and we must never hide our colours. There are times when we must dash to the front and court the encounter, when we see that our Captain's honour demands it. Let us never be either ashamed or afraid. Our Lord Jesus deserves that we should yield ourselves as willing sacrifices in defence of his faith. Ease, reputation, life itself, must go for the name and faith of Jesus. If in the heat of the battle our good name or our life must be risked to win the victory, then let us say, "In this battle some of us must fall; why should not I? I will take part and lot with my Master, and bear reproach for his sake." Only brave soldiers are worthy of our great Lord. Those who sneak into the rear, that they may be comfortable, are not worthy of the king-

dom. What will our Captain say of cowards in that day when he distributes rewards to his faithful ones? Brethren, we must be willing to bear ridicule for Christ's sake, even that peculiarly envenomed ridicule which "the cultured" are so apt to pour upon us. We must be willing to be thought great fools for Jesus' sake. Some of us have forgotten more than many of our opponents ever knew, and yet they style us ignorant; we are bearing shame because we have the courage of our convictions, and yet they call us cowards. For my part, I am willing to be ten thousand fools in one for my dear Lord and Master, and count it to be the highest honour that can be put upon me to be stripped of every honour, and loaded with every censure for the sake of the grand old truth which is written on my very heart. Those ships which sail with Jesus as their Lord High Admiral must look for tempests; for his barque was filled with the waves, and began to sink. Doth that man love his Lord who would be willing to see Jesus wearing a crown of thorns, while for himself he craves a chaplet of laurel? Shall Jesus ascend to his throne by the cross, and do we expect to be carried there on the shoulders of applauding crowds? Be not so vain in your imagination. Count you the cost, and if you are not willing to bear Christ's cross, go away to your farm and to your merchandise, and make the most of them; only let me whisper this in your ear, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

II. In the second place, having considered the fact, LET US FURTHER ENLARGE UPON IT.

What do we mean by holding fast the name of Christ? I reply, first, we mean holding fast the Deity of that name. We believe in our Lord's real Godhead. "His name shall be called Wonderful, counsellor, the mighty God." One of the names by which he is revealed to us is Immanuel. The word "El" is one of the great Oriental names of God. You get in Hebrew Elohim, and in Arabic "Allah." Our Lord Jesus is Immanu-el, that is,

God with us; and we believe him to be so. He is as truly man as any one among us; born of a virgin without taint of original sin. But he is also most surely God without the least diminution of the perfections and glories of Godhead. We put our finger into the print of the nails, but as we do .so we cry, "My Lord, and my God." "Let all the angels of God worship him." "At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." We can never give up our belief in the Godhead of our Lord Jesus, but we must and will hold fast the faith of the Deity of Christ.

We also hold fast the name of Jesus, and the faith of Jesus, as to the royalty of his name. He was born King of the Jews, and he is also "King of kings, and Lord of lords." That which Pilate wrote over his cross is true—"Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews"; but God also hath highly exalted him, and made him to have dominion over all the works of his hands. The Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son. He shall put down all rule, and all authority and power, for he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. "The Lord shall reign for ever and ever: Hallelujah"! When we bow the knee in prayer, and say, "Thy kingdom come," we mean the kingdom of God, and we mean also the kingdom of Christ Jesus, He it is that as a Lamb is seen in the midst of the throne where saints and angels pay adoring homage. Soon shall the seventh angel sound his trumpet, and great voices shall be heard in heaven saying, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever." O Jesus, we bow before thee! "Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints." He reigns in our hearts over the triple kingdom of our nature. He is King in our families; we desire to see him King in this city, King in this nation, King over all the earth; and we

shall never be satisfied till, with all the redeemed of our race, we crown him Lord of all. We hold fast the royalty of the name of Jesus Christ.

Moreover, we believe in the grandeur of that name, as being the first and the last. Open the New Testament, and read the first verse of Matthew. How does it begin? "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David." The book of the New Covenant begins with Jesus. Now look at the last verse, see how the Testament ends: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." Jesus Christ appears in the first verse, and he appears in the last verse. Did he not say, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending"? The first line of the covenant of grace is Jesus Christ; the last line of the covenant of grace is Jesus Christ; and all in between is the Lord Jesus Christ. Begin with him as A, go right through to B, C, D, E, F, and so on till you end with Z, and it is all Christ Jesus. He is all; yea, he is all in all. Oh what blessings have come to us through Jesus Christ! Through his name we have received remission of sins, in his name we are justified, in his name we are sanctified, in his name we shall be glorified, even as in him we were chosen from before the foundation of the world. My tongue can never tell you even the commencement of his greatness. Who shall declare his generation? The fringe, the hem of his infinite glories, who can touch? He is unspeakable. As for his glory, I may say, "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens." All glory and honour be unto him in whom are comprehended all the blessings whereby God hath enriched his people in time and in eternity.

We hold fast the name of Christ as we believe in its saving power. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins." We hold fast the belief that Jesus saves us from the guilt of sin by having borne it in his own body on

the tree. We are assured that he makes us just before God by that righteousness of his, which is ours, because we are one with him. He saves us from the punishment of sin because "the chastisement of our peace was upon him." He died as a victim in our stead. He saves us from the power of sin by his Spirit, and by faith in his death: we overcome sin by the blood of the Lamb. Salvation in every department, salvation from its hopeful dawning to its glorious noontide in perfection, is all of Christ Jesus. He is Saviour, and he alone. "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." He is the unique Saviour, there is no other possible salvation now or in the world to come. Believest thou in Christ? Then thou hast salvation. "But he that believeth not shall be damned." Pronounce the word hard or soft as thou wilt, it will come to the same thing in the end— thou shalt be condemned, and condemned hopelessly, if thou believest not in Jesus Christ, the one sole propitiation for the sins of men. This we hold fast. I know you are established in these truths, my beloved, and you mean to hold them as long as you breathe, and not to deny the faith which the Lord himself has delivered to you.

Once more, we hold fast this name in its immutability. We are told to-day that this is an age of progress, and therefore we must accept an improved gospel. Every man is to be his own lawyer, and every man his own saviour. We are getting on in the direction of every man putting away his own sin, just as every chimney should consume its own smoke. But, dear friends, we do not believe these idle dreams. We want no new gospel, no modern salvation. Our conviction is that Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." The way that Paul went to heaven is good enough for me.

"The way the holy prophets went,
The road that leads from banishment,"

is broad enough and safe enough for me. When I remember my dear brethren and sisters in Christ who have fallen asleep, whom I saw die with triumph lighting up their faces, I feel quite content with the salvation which saved them, and I am not going to try experiments or speculations. To talk of improving upon our perfect Saviour is to insult him. He is God's propitiation; what would you more? My blood boils with indignation at the idea of improving the gospel. There is but one Saviour, and that one Saviour is the same for ever. His doctrine is the same in every age, and is not yea and nay. What a strange result we should obtain in the general assembly of heaven if some were saved by the gospel of the first century, and others by the gospel of the second, and others by the gospel of the seventeenth, and others by the gospel of the nineteenth century! We should need a different song of praise for the clients of these various periods, and the mingled chorus would be rather to the glory of man's culture than to the praise of the one Lord. No such mottled heaven, and no such discordant song, shall ever be produced. There is one church and one Saviour. We believe in one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. To eternal glory there is but one way; to walk therein we must hold fast one truth, and be quickened by one life. We stand fast by the unaltered, unalterable, eternal name of Jesus Christ our Lord. This is what we mean by holding fast the name and the faith of Jesus.

III. Thirdly, dear friends, to lead you a step further in the same road, LET ME SHOW THE PRACTICAL PLACE OF THE NAME AND OF THE FAITH WITH US.

The practical place of it is this: first of all, it is our personal comfort—

*"Jesus, the name that charms our fears,
That bids our sorrows cease;*

*'Tis music in the sinner's ears,
'Tis life, and health, and peace."*

The faith which we hold is our daily and hourly joy and hope. The doctrines which I believe in connection with the divine Person in whom I trust are the pillow of my weariness, the anodyne of my care, the rest of my spirit. Jesus gives me a look-out for years to come which is celestial, and at the same time I can look back with thankfulness on the years which are past. For all time the Lord Jesus is our heart's content. Nothing can separate us from his love, and therefore nothing can deprive us of our confident hope. Through this blessed name and this blessed faith believers are themselves made glad and strong. On the name of Jesus we feed, and in that name we wrap ourselves. It is strength for our weakness, yea, life for our death.

And then, dear friends, this name, this faith, these are our message. Our only business here below is to cry, "Behold the Lamb." Are any of you sent of God with any other message? It cannot be. The one message which God has given to his people to proclaim is salvation through the Lamb—salvation by the blood of Jesus. It is by his blood that cleansing comes to the polluted. He is the one great Propitiation. To tell of Jesus is our occupation, we have nothing to say which is not comprised in the revelation made to us by God in Christ Jesus. He who is our one comfort is also our one theme.

He also is our divine authority for holy work. We preach the gospel in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. If we preached it in any other name men would have a right to reject it. If the spiritually sick are healed, it is his name which makes them strong. If devils flee before us, we cast them out in his name. Oh, that we did more often remember that all our teaching and preaching must be done in the name of Jesus! In his name we

gather for worship, in his name we go forth to service. If we go in our own name we go in vain; but if we are ambassadors for God, as though he did beseech men by us, then we pray them in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God, and we are hopeful that our labour will not be in vain in the Lord.

This also is our power in preaching; indeed, it is our power, our only power in living before God. Brethren, the devil will never be cast out by any other name — let us hold it fast. If we conjure by eloquence, talent, music, or what not, the evil one will say, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?" It is only his name that makes the legions of hell quit the bosoms of the possessed, and fly howling down into the deep. This is the name high over all; but there is none other which hath such power in it. Spiritual diseases, yea, death itself, will yield to this name. It is his name that makes Lazarus come forth from the grave, and the young man sit upright on the bier. Use this name, and nothing can stand before you.

I said that it is our power in life, and so, indeed, it is. When we draw near to God, what is our strength wherewith to prevail in prayer? Is it not that we ask in the name of Jesus? If you leave out the name of Jesus, what are your prayers but a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal? Prayer without the name of Jesus has no wings with which to fly up to God. This is that golden ladder whereby we climb up to the throne of God, and take unspeakably precious things out of the hand of the Eternal. That name prevaieth with God concerning everything, and so enables us to prevail with man; wherefore, hold it fast, and deny not the faith; for what can you do if the truth and the name of Jesus be given up?

This name is our one hope of victory. As Constantine, in his dream, saw the cross, and took it for his emblem, with the motto, "By this sign I conquer," so to-day our only hope of victory for the gospel is that the cross of Christ displays it, and

the name of Jesus is in it. His name is named on us, and in his name we will cast out devils, and do many mighty works, till his name shall be known and honoured wherever the sun pursues his course, or the moon cheers the watches of the night.

III. Now, in closing, I will URGE REASONS FOR HOLDING FAST THE NAME AND FAITH OF JESUS. I hope we hold it so fast that we can never give it up while reason holds its throne. There is an old Christian legend concerning Ignatius, that he never spoke without mentioning the name of Jesus whom he loved. His speech seemed saturated with love to his Lord, and when he died the name of Jesus was found to be stamped on his heart. It may not have been so literally, but no doubt it was true spiritually. The name of Jesus is, I hope, written in our hearts so as to be inseparable from our lives. Whatever else may go, the name of Jesus can never depart from our thoughts. Dying men have been known to forget everything but this. The man has forgotten his wife, his children, his bosom friend, and has turned away oblivious from them all, as if they were strangers; and yet when the name of Jesus has been whispered in his ear, his eyes have brightened, and his countenance has responded to that precious name. O memory, leave no other name than his recorded upon thy tablets! Happy forgetfulness which clears all else away, but leaves that name in solitary glory!

That it may be so I will put the question thus: Why should we give up the faith? I fail to see a reason. Why should I change my belief, or cease to hold fast the name of Christ Jesus my Lord? It is an irrational suggestion. "I am open to conviction," said a man who knew his ground, "I am open to conviction, but I should like to see the man that could convince me." I am in very much the same condition with regard to the gospel of my Lord Jesus: I am open to conviction, but I shall never see the man that can convince me out of my experience, my conviction,

my consciousness, my hope, my all. Before I could quit my faith in the substitutionary work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and my confidence in the everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure, I should have to be ground to powder, and every separate atom transformed.

What would they give us in exchange for the faith? That is a question which it is easy to ask, but impossible to answer. Suppose the doctrines of grace could be obliterated, and our hope could be taken away, what would they give us in the place of them, either for this life or the next? I have never seen anything proposed in the place of the gospel that was worth considering for a second. Have you? Uncertainty, doubt, glitter, mockery, darkness— all these; but who wants them? They offer us either bubbles or filth, according to the different shade of the speculator's character; but we are not enamoured of either. We prefer gold to dross.

We must defend the faith; for what would have become of us if our fathers had not maintained it? If confessors, reformers, martyrs, and covenanters had been recreant to the name and faith of Jesus, where would have been the churches of to-day? Must we not play the man as they did? If we do not, are we not censuring our fathers? It is very pretty, is it not, to read of Luther and his brave deeds? Of course, everybody admires Luther! Yes, yes; but you do not want any one else to do the same to-day. When you go to the Zoological Gardens you all admire the bear; but how would you like a bear at home, or a bear wandering loose about the street? You tell me that it would be unbearable, and no doubt you are right. So, we admire a man who was firm in the faith, say four hundred years ago; the past ages are a sort of bear-pit or iron cage for him; but such a man to-day is a nuisance, and must be put down. Call him a narrow-minded bigot, or give him a worse name if you can think of one. Yet imagine that in those ages

past, Luther, Zwingle, Calvin, and their compeers had said, "The world is out of order; but if we try to set it right we shall only make a great row, and get ourselves into disgrace. Let us go to our chambers, put on our night-caps, and sleep over the bad times, and perhaps when we wake up things will have grown better." Such conduct on their part would have entailed upon us a heritage of error. Age after age would have gone down into the infernal deeps, and the pestiferous bogs of error would have swallowed all. These men loved the faith and the name of Jesus too well to see them trampled on. Note what we owe them, and let us pay to our sons the debt we owe our fathers. It is to-day as it was in the Reformers' days. Decision is needed. Here is the day for the man, where is the man for the day? We who have had the gospel passed to us by martyr hands dare not trifle with it, nor sit by and hear it denied by traitors, who pretend to love it, but inwardly abhor every line of it. The faith I hold bears upon it marks of the blood of my ancestors. Shall I deny their faith, for which they left their native land to sojourn here? Shall we cast away the treasure which was handed to us through the bars of prisons, or came to us charred with the flames of Smithfield? Personally, when my bones have been tortured with rheumatism, I have remembered Job Spurgeon, doubtless of my own stock, who in Chelmsford Jail was allowed a chair, because he could not lie down by reason of rheumatic pain. That Quaker's broad-brim overshadows my brow. Perhaps I inherit his rheumatism; but that I do not regret if I have his stubborn faith, which will not let me yield a syllable of the truth of God. When I think of how others have suffered for the faith, a little scorn or unkindness seems a mere trifle, not worthy of mention. An ancestry of lovers of the faith ought to be a great plea with us to abide by the Lord God of our fathers, and the faith in which they lived. As for me, I must hold the old gospel: I can do no other. God

helping me, I will endure the consequences of what men think obstinacy.

Look you, sirs, there are ages yet to come. If the Lord does not speedily appear, there will come another generation, and another, and all these generations will be tainted and injured if we are not faithful to God and to his truth to-day. We have come to a turning-point in the road. If we turn to the right, mayhap our children and our children's children will go that way; but if we turn to the left, generations yet unborn will curse our names for having been unfaithful to God and to his Word. I charge you, not only by your ancestry, but by your posterity, that you seek to win the commendation of your Master, that though you dwell where Satan's seat is, you yet hold fast his name, and do not deny his faith. God grant us faithfulness, for the sake of the souls around us! How is the world to be saved if the church is false to her Lord? How are we to lift the masses if our fulcrum is removed? If our gospel is uncertain, what remains but increasing misery and despair? Stand fast, my beloved, in the name of God! I, your brother in Christ, entreat you to abide in the truth. Quit yourselves like men, be strong. The Lord sustain you for Jesus' sake. Amen.

SEVENTEEN
COMMENDATION FOR THE
STEADFAST

SERMON GIVEN ON JANUARY 1, 1870

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 3:8-10

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 30

*“I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee
an open door, and no man can shut it: for
thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my
word, and hast not denied my name.
Because thou hast kept the word of my
patience, I also will keep thee from the hour
of temptation, which shall come upon all the
world, to try them that dwell upon the
earth.”*

REVELATION 3:8-10.

THIS is a message to the angel of the church at Philadelphia,
and it is full of instruction to churches and ministers at this

present time. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." The Philadelphian church was not great, but it was good; it was not powerful, but it was faithful. The Spirit says, "Thou hast a little strength." Every band of believers has some strength: weak as we are in ourselves, the very fact of our possessing faith proves that we have a portion of strength. Still that strength is a matter of degrees; and certain churches have a little strength— but only a little. I suppose that the Philadelphian church had but little strength in the following respects:— the number of its members would be small, and it had therefore but little strength for undertaking any extensive enterprise which would call for numerous bands of workers. The brethren needed all their strength concentrated on their home work, for they were few, and the miss of one or two from home evangelization and edification would be greatly felt. A church may have a very short muster-roll, and yet it may be very dear to God, who thinks more of quality than of quantity, more of obedience than of numbers. They had also little strength in the direction of talent. They were not like that famous church at Corinth, where everybody could teach everybody, but where nobody cared to learn of any one. They had but small ability to speak with tongues, or work miracles, or teach the word; but they adhered faithfully to what they had been taught by the apostles of the Lord: they were not brilliant, but they were sound. Churches with few men of learning or eloquence in them may yet be greatly approved of the Lord, who cares more for grace than learning, more for faith than talent. In all probability they were, like most of the churches of that day, possessed of very little pecuniary strength. They could do but little where money would be required. They were a company of poor people with no man of means among them; and there are many such churches that are peculiarly precious to the heart of God, who cares nothing for gold, and everything

for sincerity. Possibly they were little, too, in those things which go side by side with grace: I mean in knowledge, and in power to utter what they knew. This was a pity; but as it was their misfortune and not their fault, they were not blamed for it. The Lord does not blame us for having little strength, but for having little love, little faith, little zeal, little consecration.

The Philadelphian saints, like the limpet, which has but little strength, stuck firmly to the rock, and they are commended for it. They had little strength, but they kept God's word, and they did not deny his name. Possibly if they had felt stronger they might have presumptuously quitted the word of the Lord for the opinions of men, as the Galatians did, and then they would have lost their reward. May every church of the Lord Jesus Christ, whether it have little strength or much, be concerned to be steadfast in the faith—loyal to King Jesus—firm in the truths which Christ has taught us by the Holy Ghost.

But, dear friends, as this expression was used to the angel of the church at Philadelphia, whom I suppose to be the minister of the church, I do not feel that I shall be doing any violence to the text if I take it in reference to each individual; and I have no doubt that there will be individual Christians present at this time who, though they have but little strength, have kept God's word. If so, they will receive a reward for it, according to the grace of God. They have been firm and steadfast in their confession of the faith once delivered unto the saints, and the Lord who gave them the grace to be so will give them yet more grace as the recompense of their fidelity. We will speak upon the text to-night with a view to that, and we shall notice, first, that there is a word of praise: God praises this faithful messenger of the church. Secondly, he gives him a word of prospect. He says, "I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my

word." And then, thirdly, we shall speak upon a word of promise which is in the text in the tenth verse: "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Oh that my words might call out some faithful ones in these evil days. We need pillars in the house of our God. Where are they to be found?

I. First I would remind you that our text has in it **A WORD OF PRAISE.**

I do not think that we should be so slow as we sometimes are in praising one another. There is a general theory abroad that it is quite right and proper to point out to a brother all his imperfections, for it will be a salutary medicine to him, and prevent his being too happy in this vale of tears. Is it supposed that we shall cheer him on to do better by always finding fault with him? If so, some people ought to be very good by this time, for they have had candid friends in plenty. Find fault with a brother and he will be kept from growing too proud; and he will, no doubt, go forward blessing you very much for your kind consideration in promoting his humility. Remember also that it is so much to the increase of brotherly love to have a clear eye to see the imperfections of our friends. Does anyone in his senses think so? I should suppose that after having given a sufficient trial to that manner of procedure, it would be quite as well at times to try another, and to rejoice in everything which we see of grace in our brethren, and sometimes to thank God in their hearing for what we perceive in them that we are sure is the fruit of the Spirit. If they are what they should be, they will not think so much of our little praises as to be unduly exalted thereby; but they will be sometimes so encouraged as to be nerved to higher and nobler things. If a man deserves my commendation, I am only paying a debt when I give it to him, and it is dishonest to withhold it under the pretence that he

would not use the payment rightly. Men who deserve praise can bear it, and some of them even need it. I should not wonder that the kindly words of God's people may be but a rehearsal of that "Well done, good and faithful servant" which will one day sound in their ears; and be a useful rehearsal, too, helping them on their weary way. Good men have many conflicts, let us minister to their comfort. At any rate, the great Head of the church did not think it unwise to say to the church at Philadelphia that he thought well of it because it had kept his word. Let us give honour to whom honour is due, and encourage those who are aiming to do right.

What had these Philadelphian believers done that they should be praised? What they did was this— they kept the word of God: "Thou hast kept my word, and thou hast not denied my name." What does this mean?

Does it not mean, first, that they had received the word of God; for if they had not heard it and held it they could not have kept it. It was theirs, they heard it and had no wish to hear anything else. It was theirs, they read it and searched it and made it their own. They hoarded up divine knowledge in their memories, preserved it in their affections, used it in their experience, and practised it in their lives. They were not ashamed of revealed truth, but, on the contrary, they took it for their possession, their heritage, their treasure, their all. I trust that many of us can say that the doctrines of grace are our jewels, our estate, yea, our very life. God has put us in trust with the gospel, and we will sooner part with all that we have than be false to our trust. It is no small privilege so to be taught of the Holy Ghost as to have a taste for the gospel, a deep attachment to the truths of the covenant.

Next, we may be sure that they loved the word of God. They had an intense delight in it. They appreciated it: they fed upon it. They stored it up as bees store away honey, and they

were as ready to defend it as bees are to guard their stores. They meditated upon it; they sought to understand it; they took delight in everything which came from the mouth of God. Men do not keep things which they consider to be valueless: if men in our day had a higher opinion of the truth they would be more valiant for it. People are always ready to part with that for which they have no esteem, and for this very reason many are quite willing to give up the Bible to critics and philosophers, those footpads and burglars of faith. But he that keeps God's word, we may be sure, is deeply in love with it. Oh, dear child of God, you may be very little in Israel; but if you love the word of God there is a something about you in which God takes delight. He sees you at your Bible-reading, he marks you in your endeavours to get at the meaning of his word, he notes you when you sit down and meditate upon his divine thoughts, and he takes pleasure in your eagerness to know what the will of the Lord is. He says, "I know thy works"; and though you may be one of little influence and little ability, yet he is pleased with you because you are pleased with his word.

More, however, is meant than simply loving the word, though that is no small thing. It means that they believed it, believed it most thoroughly, and so kept it. I am afraid that there are great truths in God's word which we do not intelligently believe, but take for granted. We say, "Yes, yes; these doctrines are in the Creed;" and we put them up on the top shelf, and by that very act we lay them aside and do not heartily believe in them for ourselves. We grow very vexed if anybody denies them; but if there is no controversy over them we forget them. Is this wise? We call our opponents heterodox, and our zeal for orthodoxy comes to the front; and yet, after all, it may be that we have never exercised a personal faith about those doctrines, so as to think them out for ourselves. It is a grand thing to work your passage to a truth, to mine your way to the

golden ore by digging and clearing. True believers may be likened to those mites in the cheese which eat their way into it, and penetrate into the centre by feeding upon all that lies in their way as they advance. We eat our way into the word of God, we live upon what we learn, tunnelling through the truth with receptive minds. The truth is too great for us ever to absorb it all, but daily and hourly we live upon it. We so believe it, as to treat it as a matter of fact, valuable for everyday use: this is the surest way to keep it, even to the end. Now, dear child of God, as I have said before, you may have but very little strength, you may often be tempted and tried, and cast down; but if you believe the word, there is more for the pleasing of God in a childlike faith than there is in the most glittering profession or in the most showy deeds. Faith is the Koh-i-noor among jewels,— the queen of the virtues. Believe you God's word, and you have wrought a god-like work. Believe it when others contradict it, and you are a conqueror over them all. Believe it when circumstances seem to make it questionable; believe it when your own heart fails you; believe it when your sin and corruption rise within you like a fountain of foul waters: thus shall you give glory to the God of truth. Still hold on to the promise made to you in the word of God, and to the manifestation of God which is seen in Christ Jesus, and you will be doing your God the honour which he deserves at your hands, and he will say, "I know thy works; for thou hast a little strength, but thou hast kept my word."

Furthermore, in addition to the inner possession and the hearty belief of the truth, we must be ready to adhere to it at all times. That, perhaps, is the central thought here,— "Thou hast kept my word." Why, there are great folk among us that never care to believe according to God's word at all. They have thought out what they believe; their theology is made out of their own substance, as spiders spin their webs out of their own

bowels. But, surely, in everything which concerns the doctrines of our most holy faith, we must make reference to a "Thus, saith the Lord." It is not what I think; it is not what some greater man may think; it is not what may be the consensus of all the enlightened minds of the period: the decision lies with what the Lord has spoken. God's thoughts are as high above ours as the heavens are above the earth; dare we drag them down and sit in judgment on them? If the thought of the age happens to be right, well and good; but it is not upon temporary opinion that we rest. Our faith stands not in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God. What is taught in Holy Scripture is sure truth to us, and every other statement must bow to it. Chillingworth said what ought to be true, though I am afraid that it is not—"The Bible and the Bible alone is the religion of Protestants." I should like to see a few more of such Protestants. Many say that we ought to keep "abreast of the times," whatever that may mean; and that there is a certain "spirit of the age," to which we should be subject. This to me is treason against sovereign truth. I know of one only spirit to whom I desire to be subject, and that is the Spirit of all the ages, who never changes. By his teaching we are not only nineteen centuries behind the present age, but we come in at the back of all the ages of human history. If we have but little strength, we mean to let the times and the spirits go where they like, we shall keep to the Holy Spirit and to his eternal teachings. Supposing that we have not such big heads as some have, and cannot excogitate or multiply sophisms and inventions as they do, it will be no small thing to be commended at the last, in these terms—"Thou hast a little strength, but thou hast kept my word." Brother, cling to God's word; cling to infallible and immutable revelation! Whatever novelty comes up, keep to the word of Jesus! Whatever discovery may be made by the wise men of the age, let Christ be wisdom unto you. Regard the new

teachers no more than you would the wise men of Gotham, for those who oppose themselves to God's word are fools. Let them cry "Lo here, or lo there," but believe them not. Here is your anchorage. The Book is our ultimatum.

*"Within this sacred volume lies
The mystery of mysteries;
Happiest they of human race
To whom our God hath given grace
To read, to mark, to think, to pray,
To know the right, to learn the way;
But better they had ne'er been born
Who read to doubt, or read to scorn."*

That which is not in Holy Scripture is not to be received as matter of faith in the Christian church; but that which is there is to be received and held with that stern steadfastness, that incorruptible faith, which no more changes than the unchanging truth which it has grasped. Woe be to the man who is first a Calvinist, then an Arminian, then a Pelagian, then a Unitarian; never finding rest for the sole of his foot; keeping nothing because he has nothing to keep. This Philadelphian church had won the commendation, "Thou hast kept my word." Dear hearer, see that you win it too.

And no doubt also it was intended in this sense— that they had obeyed the word of God. "Thou; hast a little strength:" there are very few of you, but you have been observant of all precepts and ordinances. Some think it a great thing to be members of a popular sect, but when the great curtain rolls up, and all things are seen as they are, and not as they seem, do you not think that that church will be most commended which was truest to the teaching of the Holy Spirit in everything? Christian chivalry should make you feel it better to be a member of a

church of six doing the Lord's work conscientiously than to be a member of a church of six millions which has turned aside from it. I could not be in communion with a church whose chief guide and authority is another book than God's word, and whose acknowledged Head is other than the Lord Jesus Christ. I had sooner stand alone than yield with a crowd to an Act of Parliament which was passed to dictate to me the form in which I may worship God. There shall come a day when it will be found that the minorities have generally saved both the world and the church. A struggling few may reckon themselves to be the majority when they stand alone with God, for HE counts for more than all the myriads of the earth put together. The faithful, staunch, God-fearing men that would not budge an inch, or change a letter, or shape a syllable, to please all the kings and princes of the earth, shall be found to praise and honour in the day of the Lord's appearing. These are the men that Christ shall stoop from his throne to honour: they that have trifled with his word shall be lightly esteemed: they that have wilfully broken one of the least of his commandments, and have taught men so, shall be least in the kingdom of heaven. Blessed and happy shall he be who followeth the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. Blessed shall he be who only wanted to know the Lord's will that he might do it unquestioningly, caring nothing what the will of other people might be in the matter.

I shall put it home to you, dear friends, again. You may have but little strength, but do you keep God's word? You may never become more numerous, or more influential; but do let it be true of you, that you have kept God's word. Be students of God's word and adherents of it. Take no notice of anything I say if it cannot be supported by the word of divine truth. Take equally little notice of what any man says, be he orator, thinker, bishop, or whatever he may be. There is no value in all the brass counters which circulate among the many; they are

current with the world, but the Kingdom of God does not know them. The words of men are trifling in value; it takes a mass of them to come to the value of a farthing; but any one word of the Lord is worth a mint of gold. If a doctrine be of God, if it has come out of the loving lips of the Lord Jesus, hold it fast, as for dear life. Let men call you bigot, but never mind, hold you on with all your might, and your Lord will smile upon you.

Thus have I explained what the Philadelphians did. They did it under great disadvantages, but that only helped to increase the weight of praise measured out to them. They had little talent, but they kept God's word. Oh, that men who have ten talents would not be so anxious to be original in their teaching! Oh, that they would cease to display their own thought, their own cleverness, and individuality. If you have little talent, it is a pity you have not more; but still it is for your praise if you quit yourselves like men, and stand fast in the faith. It may be, you have little strength of mind; but I hope even then grace enables you to be firm for truth. In other things you may be easily persuaded, and readily talked over; but be you doubly staunch in the things of God. There make your mark, and put your foot down. Let it be seen that you do not go to be stirred in those vital points, till your friends say of you, "Oh, you can twist William anywhere, but not in his religion. On that point he is a regular Puritan; there is no moving him." May it always be so; even if you have but little strength, see to it that you keep Christ's word.

Possibly you have not much strength as to influence: your sphere may be very narrow, and your power in it very slight. That does not matter; but it does matter that you be faithful to your Lord. If you have kept God's word you may be wielding an influence far beyond what you imagine. Good men in the dark days of Popery found out the truth, but they only lived, perhaps, in some quiet village, or shut up in a monastery, and

the most they could do was to write down what they knew and so keep it. We have met with instances where they wrote out part of the word of God, and hid it away in a wall; and afterwards, when the wall was pulled down, the priceless record was discovered and used. Truth does not die through being buried. Some taught the gospel very quietly in their own family circle, and so kept it. Some would get a few copies of the New Testament, and go about and sell them in their baskets; and so they kept the truth. Those men of old time whose influence upon their own age seemed so little, nevertheless prepared the way for those braver spirits who, by-and-by, shone forth like the stars of the morning. Hold fast God's word and never mind what comes of it for the moment; God's seed may not grow in a day, but it will grow. If you only influence one child, who can tell what that child may be? If you only help to strengthen one solitary Christian woman, who knows what may come to pass by her means? We see the telegraph wires, but we do not see what messages they may carry. The ropes hang down in our belfry, but the glorious chime is aloft. We cannot see the big bells, but it is ours to pull the ropes that are near our hand, and do what God bids us to do, and music will come of it somewhere. Above all, if we have but little strength of any kind, let us keep God's word.

Now, why should God's word be kept in this way? What is there to praise about keeping God's word? I answer, because it is a holy thing to treasure up God's word. I have gone into the churches on the Continent, and I have seen gold and silver plate in the sacristy, understood to be worth one or two or three millions of money. These were said to be the treasures of the church. Why, these are the treasures of men, and they shall pass away. The solid truth of revelation, the doctrine of the Holy Ghost, a divine experience given to you by that Holy Ghost — all this is the treasure of the church, and you are doing

a holy thing when you guard it against every adversary. To this purpose are saints sent into the world— to keep this treasure of the church against all adversaries. Truth is the jewel for which all believers must be ready to die. Solomon made shields of gold, which were borne before the king when he went into the house of the Lord; but Rehoboam took away the shields of gold, and put shields of brass in their place. It is to be feared many are doing the same at this moment. Let us bear our protest: the gold is good enough for us. Do not throw away the best for the sake of getting something that may be newer, but that must be far inferior. I hold one single sentence out of God's word to be of more certainty, and of more power, than all the discoveries of all the learned men of all the ages.

I might have seen the Alexandrian library burned without losing a night's rest, for the mass of its contents must have been mere rubbish; but were there one single verse of the New Testament which it were possible to blot out from human memory and record, one might be willing to lay down his life to save the glorious sentence. The mind of man sends forth pure water and impure, and it is hard to discern between the two; but from the heart of God there wells up, undiluted and unmingled, a stream of living truth which is more for man's benefit than all else out of heaven. Warriors guard kings, and crowns, and thrones; but the living truth of the living God is infinitely more worthy of our watch. Oh for ten thousand valiant men to stand about the bed of the truth, each man with his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night. Therefore, as it is a holy thing, a heavenly thing, a priceless thing, keep you God's word.

Besides, it is a wise thing, for you that have but little strength, to keep God's word. The feebler you are the more closely should you keep to the Scriptures. Remember what Solomon says,— "The conies are a feeble folk," but he puts

them down as wise people, for they have their habitation in the rocks. If a disputer can once get you away from the Bible, he can swallow you alive; but if you will keep to Scripture, and handle this weapon, "It is written; it is written," the disputer may be the arch-fiend himself, but he cannot possibly get the victory over you. Your wisdom is not to try to gain keenness of mind that you may emulate the critic, but to lay hold upon God's word, and cling to it, for therein shall be your safety and your victory.

Again, dear friends, we ought to hold fast to the truth of God, because, if we have little strength, it is there that we shall get more strength. We shall never grow stronger by leaving the eternal word. Nay, but as we cling to God in feebleness, the divine strength of the word is infused into our souls. Besides, God's word is a supporting thing, and he who quits it leaves his chief helper. He that receives it shall live, but without it there is no spiritual life. Therefore let us hold it. If men would take away from us certain dainties which are sweet but which are not needful, we might be content to let them spoil us of such superfluities; but if they come to take away bread and water from the poor and needy, then we cannot have it. For this we must stand up and fight to the death. The word that cometh out of Christ's mouth is the daily manna of our heavenly life, and it behoves every Christian, however feeble or however strong, to keep the word of God with all his might against all comers, since it is his life. I am at this pass, I can sooner die than yield the gospel. I may be a fool, and an old-fashioned bigot, but I am not a turncoat, and I cannot quit the word of the Lord. If I must be the last of the Puritans, I will not be ashamed of it. My Lord will revive his buried truth as sure as he is God: the present madness will cease with its own short hour.

So much, then, with regard to this word of praise.

II. I will not be long on the next point, while I just remind

you that there is A WORD OF PROSPECT:— “Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word.”

It seems to me to mean just this,— “You have been faithful; therefore I will use you. You have been steadfast; therefore I will employ you.” For a considerable period of human life, it may be, God does not give to all of us a field of usefulness, but he provides a field of trial. There are some to whom he early opens the gate of usefulness, because he sees in them a spirit that will bear the temptation of success; but in many other cases it is questionable whether they could bear promotion, and therefore the Lord permits them to be tried in different ways until he sees that they are found faithful, and then he puts them into his service, and gives them an opportunity of bearing witness for him. Now, dear friend, perhaps hitherto you have been perfectly satisfied with holding the truth with all your might, and being faithful to it in private and in your own daily life. I want to suggest to you that if you have done this for some time the era has now arrived when you may go forward to somewhat more. There are opportunities before you now which were not there before: these are placed before you especially because you have been tried, and have been proved faithful. If you will now begin to talk to others about that which you love so well, you will be astonished to find how gladly they will receive it from you. You have been a receiver yourself until now, and that is well and good; but, now that you have become filled, overflow to others, and let them receive of your joy. “How do I know that they will accept it?” say you. I know it from this fact— that, as a general rule, the man that keeps God’s word has an open door before him. If you have been vacillating and shift-y and tricky, and have believed everything and nothing, nobody will take any particular notice of what you say, except it be to shut the door against your uncertain prattle. But

when they have observed how you stand to the truth, how solid, and how steadfast you are, they will give over disputing with you, and come to inquire what your views really are. People do not care about knocking their heads against brick walls, or fighting against pillars of iron; and when they see that you are firm and unmoved, they will say, "We must let him have his own way." When a man begins his Christian life in a kind of dubious, half-hearted way, his friends do not know whether he is really going to carry it out or not: at any rate, as he endeavours to avoid all persecution, they do not know what to think of him, and they feel encouraged to treat him as one who can be pressed and squeezed at pleasure. If there is a secret entrance to heaven he prefers it; he means to go round about and climb over the wall somewhere, or sneak in at the back gate. This poor creature has no power or influence; he is rather ridiculous than useful. Nobody ever respects him. Nobody cares a button about him. The devil himself does not trouble him much, for he knows that he will do no harm to his kingdom, let him talk as he likes. But the man who says, "I am going straight for glory, and if anybody is in my way so much the worse for him, for I am bound to take the right road;" such a man will find a pretty clear track. Mr. Moody would say, "Make a bee line for heaven." A bee knows the nearest way, and keeps to it with all its force. Let me hear each one of you say, "I am not going to take any corners, or twists, or windabouts; but, straight away, what God bids me to do I am going to do; what he bids me believe I am going to believe; and if there is anything to be suffered for it, all right. I have added it all up, and I count the reproach of Christ to be greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt." This is the right kind of resolution. God help you to keep to it. Before you, my brother, the Lord God has set an open door. Go ahead! Do not be afraid. People will be willing to hear what you have to say, and, what is more, people will be converted by

what you say, for God has set before you this open door, and no man can shut it. It is amazingly easy to go through a door when it is wide open, and it will be very easy to you— much easier than you think, now that you have been schooled by God's Spirit into steadfastness of character, just to say in Gods name, dependent upon God's strength, what he has taught you. You will bring many to Christ, because you yourself abide in Christ.

Come, brother, you did not reckon that such usefulness would ever fall to your lot; did you? Cheer up, and get to work. Wake up to holy energy. In the Sunday-school there are little children that you will be the means of bringing to Christ if you take a class; and out at the street corners there are folks that you will turn to the Saviour if you have but the courage to stand up and preach. Out in the villages, or in the crowded city hearts await you. I say not this of you all, but only of confirmed and faithful ones. If you feel, "I never can give up the Bible; I never can forsake the truths that I have learnt from it: they are stamped on my heart, they are cut into the very centre of my soul," then you are the man who may safely go forth to publish the truth. There is an open door before you which no man can shut. Gird up your loins and enter it. Rush to the front. Victory lies before you. God means to use you. You are a vessel fit for the Master's use, and there never was a vessel fit for his use that he did not use one day or other. The hour needs its man quite as much as the man needs the hour. Take time by the forelock and honour your God. The Lord help you to keep his word, and then to go in for public testimony.

III. Our last point was to be A WORD OF PROMISE; for, according to the tenth verse, it is written, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Those who keep God's word, shall themselves be kept from temptation. The Lord returns

into his servants' bosoms that which they render to him: he gives keeping for keeping.

Now, I shall speak for myself and for you, and I know that we can bear witness that this promise is true. One says to me, "Are you not perplexed about the prevalence of modern thought—the new phase of divinity that has come up of late, and the general progress that is being made towards a new theology? Does it not trouble you?" Not a bit. Modern ideas do not affect me in the slightest. If all men that live or ever shall live should throw up the old Calvinism, there remains one that will hold it, for this reason—that he could not hold any other. I must be crushed out of existence before my convictions of the truth of the doctrines of grace in the old-fashioned form can ever be taken from me. I am miserable, wretched, lost if the doctrines of grace be not true. I am joyous, glad, strong, happy if these doctrines be true. I cannot give them up, therefore; and especially because as I read, and the more I read, I perceive these things to be written in the word of God, and therefore I must hold them.

In this church we feel very little of the temptation which tries all the world: very seldom are any of our friends unsettled in their minds, or tormented with these hornets of heresy. "Alas," said one minister to me, "I see some of my best people becoming sceptical; are you not worried by seeing the thoughtful ones drifting off into new views?" "No, not at all." "Why not?" "Because the grace of God keeps our people to their moorings. They know what they believe and they have no desire to change." If a man does not believe the doctrines of grace, he comes to hear me once, and he says, "I am not going there any more." He talks to some of you, and you are so dogmatic, and firmly rooted, he calls you pig-headed, and says it is no use arguing with such bigots; and so he goes to argue somewhere else. This is exactly as we would have it. When a

bushel is full of wheat the good corn keeps the chaff out of the measure. This is the Lord's way of delivering those who keep his word: thus he shuts them away from the temptation that comes upon others. He seems to say, "Dear child, since you will not go beyond my written word, you shall not be tempted to go beyond it. I will cause the enemies of the truth to leave you alone. You shall be offensive to them, or they to you, and you shall soon part company." Remember how Mr. Bunyan pictures it. When Talkative came up to gossip with Christian and Hopeful, he chattered away upon all sorts of topics, and they were wearied with him. To get rid of him, Christian said to Hopeful, "Now we will talk a little about experimental godliness;" and when they began to speak about what they had tasted and handled of divine truth, Mr. Chatterbox dropped behind. He did not like spiritual conversation, neither do any of the breed. The holy pilgrims were not so rude as to tell him to go; they only talked about heavenly things, which he did not understand, and he went of his own accord. I believe that result is sure to follow holy conversation and sound preaching. Keep to the truth, and the modern school will give you a wide berth. But if any of you try the double-shuffle in religion—the plan of trying to believe a little of everything and not much of anything — if you try to hold with the hare and run with the hounds, you will be tempted to deadly error, and it will serve you right. In the temptation you will fall, for indeed you are fallen already. Keep the word of God, and the word of God will keep you. You will be shielded from half the temptations that fret and worry professors if you take your place and keep it against all comers.

Or perhaps the text may mean that if the temptation shall come you shall be preserved from it. The deliberately-formed conviction that the word of God is the standard of our faith, and the unwavering habit of referring everything to it and standing and falling by it, may not deliver us from every error,

but they will save us from that which is the nurse and matrix of every error— that is, the habit of trusting to our own understanding, or relying upon the understandings of our fellow-men. I value more a solid confidence in the word of God than even the knowledge that comes out of it; for that faith is a saving habit, a sanctifying habit, in every way a strengthening and confirming and preserving habit. May God grant to us that whatever form of temptation may come upon the face of the earth, we may stand fast for his truth, so that none of us may perish like Judas, the son of perdition.

All this I have spoken to the people of God, but I am not ignorant that there are some here who do not know God's word, nor love it. They have never embraced it, and to them no blessing can come through it. But why should you not receive it? Does it not strike you as being reasonable that, if God has spoken, his creatures ought to believe what he has spoken,— that after he has laid down the law there should remain no room for questioning?

*"This is the judge that ends the strife,
When wit and reason fail."*

Come you, then, and search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Christ; and let it not be said that you will not come unto him that you might have life. As God bears testimony in his word to his own dear Son, believe that testimony; accept the Saviour whom he has given, and find immediate salvation: find it to-night. Go out of the place saying, "I believe it." "He that believeth hath everlasting life," for "this is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and. Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." I warrant you if you get faith into your soul, and the word

becomes your joy and comfort, you will never let it go. You will sing as we did just now, and as I sang very heartily—

*“Let all the forms that men devise
Assault my soul with treacherous art,
I’ll call them vanity and lies,
And bind the gospel to my heart.”*

So may God bless you.

Amen.

EIGHTEEN
THE AMEN

SERMON GIVEN ON MARCH 4, 1866

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 3:14

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 12

"The Amen."

REVELATION

3:14

THE word "Amen" is much more full of meaning than may be supposed, and as a title of our Lord Jesus Christ it is eminently suggestive. As you know the word is a Hebrew one, which has been very properly conveyed not only into our language, but into most, if not all the languages of Christendom. It is a happy circumstance that some of these words should have had vitality enough in them to be transplanted into other tongues, and still to flourish; it gives some faint foreshadowing of the united worship of celestial spirits; and it indicates the Lord's will that

the Hebrew race shall not be forgotten by his Church, and that the language of his well-beloved Israel stills sounds sweetly in his ear. AMEN signifies, true, faithful, certain, but its sense will be better seen by carefully noting its uses. It had at least three forms of practical meaning. First, it was used in the sense of asserting; when a person would give peculiar authority to his words, he either commenced or concluded with the word Amen; and thus declared as with the solemn "yea, yea," of an honest truth-loving man, certainly, assuredly, so it is. Our Saviour uses the term frequently. The word which we translate "Verily, verily," is this word "Amen." You must have observed that John who has a quick eye for the divine moods of the Lord Jesus notes with unerring fidelity the repetition of the asserting word. Whenever our blessed Lord was about to say something peculiarly solemn, into which he would throw the full weight of his authority, he asserted it by the doubling of the word "Amen, amen," or "Verily, verily," at the commencement of it. The second sense of the word Amen slightly varies from asserting, and may be more properly described as consenting. There is a memorable instance of this in the case of the woman who drank the water of jealousy. (Numbers v. 22.) When she drank the water of jealousy, it was enacted that if she had been guilty of the crime laid to her door, certain terrible results should follow as the effect of this water; she, at the time she drank it, said "Amen, amen;" that is, she gave her consent that such-and-such pangs should fall upon her if she had been really guilty of adultery. And a more memorable instance still is that of the people assembled upon Mount Ebal and Gerizim; when the threatenings and the blessings were both read in their hearing, the people said "Amen, amen." So let it be. Of the like character is the case in the book of Nehemiah; when Ezra blessed Jehovah, the great God, all the people answered, Amen, with lifting up of their hands. A third meaning of the word Amen is

what we may call petitionary. In this sense we use it at the close of our prayers. "Our Father who art in heaven" is not a complete model of public prayer till it concludes with "Amen." In the ancient Church it was customary for the entire congregation to say Amen. Paul alludes to this custom in that expression in the Corinthians, where he speaks of persons praying in an unknown tongue; he says, "How should he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?" We have it put on record by Jerome, that at Rome the people were accustomed to say Amen in the gatherings of the early Christians so heartily, I might add so lustily, that it was like the dash of a cataract, or a clap of thunder. I could wish that we more uniformly and universally said Amen at the close of public prayer; I am sure it would be scriptural and apostolic, and I believe it would be useful to you all. Perhaps the custom was dropped on account of the irregular way in which the brethren said Amen. I have heard the same irregularity in certain rustic Methodist congregations, when I have thought that the Amen was put in the wrong place; and could have wished the custom to be discontinued altogether, because certain illiterate, rash, but zealous brethren said Amen when there was nothing to say Amen, to, and so rather created ridicule than reverence, and showed as much folly as fervour. However, a judicious revival of the custom would, I doubt not, be useful in the Church of God. It then signifies, "So be it, so let it be," and is virtually the consent of the entire congregation to the prayer which has been put up. Observe the devout Amen of Benaiah, at the close of David's dying prayer, with the remarkable addition, "The Lord God of my lord the king say so too." (1 Kings i. 36.) Notice also how the psalmist closes several of the psalms, such as the forty-first and the seventy-second with the emphatic conclusion, "Amen and Amen,"

*“Let every creature rise and bring
Peculiar honours to our King;
Angels, descend with songs again,
And earth, repeat the long AMEN.”*

Should you desire still further to enquire into the use and meaning of this remarkable word, there is a valuable sermon upon it in the works of Abraham Booth which you may read, as I have done, to great advantage. If anything should lead to the revival of its use more generally in public worship, it will be matter of great congratulation.

It strikes me that I might have divided my discourse this morning very fairly under these three heads — asserting, consenting, petitioning. For in each of these our adorable Lord Jesus Christ is certainly “the Amen.” He asserts the will of God — he asserts God himself. God the Son is constantly called the Logos, the Word; he who asserts, declares and testifies God. In the second place, we know that Jesus Christ consents to the will, design, and purpose of Jehovah. He gives an Amen to the will of God — is, in fact, the echo, in his life and in his death, of the eternal purposes of the Most High. And, thirdly, lie is “the Amen” in the petitionary sense; for to all our prayers he gives whatever force and power they have. It is his Amen to our supplication which makes it prevalent at the throne of the Most High. In these three senses Christ may well be called THE AMEN.

But we have preferred to divide the discourse another way. Our blessed and ever-to-be-adored Lord Jesus is, first, “the Amen” in reference we to God; secondly, “the Amen men” as viewed in himself; and, thirdly, I trust some of us have distinctly trusted him to be “the Amen” in regard to ourselves.

I. Refresh your memories upon the great truth, OUR LORD, IS SUPERLATIVELY GOD S AMEN.

Let us review the various points in which he is “the Amen” of God. We must speak, of course, of God after the manner of men; let that grain of salt be understood to savour all that we say. Jesus is “the. Amen ” of the divine purposes. There was a day before all days, when there was no day but the Ancient of days; — a time before all times when He who made all time dwelt alone. Then in his august mind he conceived the plan of redemption. He foresaw the world ruined by sin. He determined that a number whom no man could number should be redeemed unto himself to be for ever his children, the beloved of his soul. These purposes he made, and fixed them fast: — there should be a people who should show forth his praise for ever and ever. These purposes were but purposes until God said Amen to them, and made them valid and sure decrees by determining to give his own dear Son. If God had not resolved to give the Lord Jesus Christ to be a redeemer, the purpose of redemption would have had no Amen. If he had not appointed Christ to be the head of the body, his purpose concerning the body would have lacked the Amen. The giving of our souls to Christ according to the Scriptures was a most ancient covenant transaction; and the gift of the Son to us was of equally ancient date, for he is regarded by God as the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world. That gift of Christ to us in the eternal covenant was the mighty Father’s virtually stamping his decree and making it valid and good. Long ere you and I had a being, before this great world started out of nothingness, God had made every purpose of his eternal counsel to stand fast and firm by the gift of his dear Son to us. He was then God’s Amen to his eternal purpose.

When our Lord actually came upon the earth, he was then God’s Amen to the long line of prophecies. One by one the servants of God had testified concerning the coming Messiah. Some had spoken evangelically with Isaiah; others with a more

legal savour as Moses; but their testimony was to the same effect, that in due time a prophet should be raised up, and that there should be born of a virgin a man who should at the same time be "the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father." These promises followed thick and fast, all of them cohering, each one manifesting the self-same coming One; but there was no Amen to them, they were things hoped for, but not the substance thereof; till at last, in the silence of midnight, angels sweetly sang his advent, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, goodwill toward men! For unto you is born this day in Bethlehem a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." That babe among the horned oxen, that carpenter's son, was God's declaration that prophecy was the voice of heaven. Now, ye prophets, sleeping in your tombs, it is witnessed that ye lied not. Now hath God himself come forth and set to his seal that ye are true. In the blessed form of Mary's child, God's Amen appears both to shepherds and to wise men.

In the same sense also Christ was God's Amen to all the Levitical types. The morning and the evening lamb, the red heifer, the turtle doves, and the two young pigeons whose blood stained the altar, the sacrificial bullock, the scapegoat, the plentiful sprinklings of blood — all these were man's avowal that he believed in God, and at the same time God declaring to man that he had provided a sacrifice. Yonder smoking bullock offered by Aaron and his sons is nothing yet, it is but a figure, it lacks the Amen to give it body, force, substance. That uplifted knife, that priest clad in fair white linen, that blood spilt upon the altar — all these are nothing, they want a soul put into them. When Jesus Christ came, and especially when up to the cross as to the altar he went as a victim and was laid thereon, then it was that God solemnly put an Amen into what otherwise was but typical and shadowy. "It is finished," said the Saviour, and then was, as our poet puts it, —

*“Finish’d all the types and shadows
Of the ceremonial law!
Finish’d all that God had promised;
Death and hell no more shall awe:
It is finish’d! Saints, from hence your comfort
draw.”*

“The Amen” is set to the purposes, to the prophecies, and to the types.

It is exceedingly worthy of your regard, that Christ is God’s Amen to the Majesty of his law. That was a very solemn Amen which God gave on the top of Sinai, when he came with ten thousand of his holy ones, and the mountain smoked beneath his feet. As I hear those words, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength;” that blast of the trumpet waxing exceeding loud and long, that crack of thunder, and yon mighty flashes of great lightnings were God’s Amen. AMEN rolled in peals along the wilderness of Kadesh, made the tents of Kedar tremble, and made the hinds to calve, and broke even the lofty cedars of Lebanon. It was such a terrible Amen that the people begged that they might hear it no more; their hearts were subdued with the terror of the dread appearances of God’s law, though he revealed it in the hands of a mediator by angels. But, dear friends, I can point you to a more solemn Amen than that, more terrible than Sinai, although ye can better bear the sight. God has said, “The soul that sinneth it shall die;” “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them.” There stands the Son of God. He has not sinned himself, but he has the sins of all his people imputed to him. He has never broken the law, but all our breaches thereof were laid on him. Now what will God say to him? God meets him as he once met Adam in the garden, but Jesus did

not hide himself as Adam did, he met stern Justice face to face. There he is, the sinner's substitute; what will the infinitely just Jehovah say now? The law says he is accursed, for he has sin upon him; will the Father consent that his own Beloved shall be made a curse for us? Hearken and hear the Lord's Amen. "Awake, O sword, against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord," What, does God the Father say Amen? Can it be? It is even so. He says, Amen. And what an awful Amen too, when the streaming sweat of blood started from every pore of his most blessed and immaculate body, and fell in terrible clots upon the frosty ground. O God, thou didst say Amen indeed to all the terror of thy law when Christ had to cry, "I am exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Yet louder still is that Amen at Golgotha where stands the Saviour, mocked, despised, rejected; at the Roman column, torn with scourges, and in the seat of mockery crowned with thorns. There the law seemed to say, "The sinner is to be despised and rejected, the sinner is a shameful thing, worthy to be spit upon, the sinner deserves to be crowned with thorns" and God says, Amen, and his own dear Son who stood in the sinner's place was made to set forth God's awful assent to the demands of justice. Yonder along the streets of Jerusalem, over stones as hard as the hearts of Jerusalem's sons and daughters, harder they could not be, he goes, leaving a blood-track up to Calvary's mound ; and there, when hands and feet are pierced, and his soul pierced with something worse than nails, and his heart made to drink of draughts more bitter than wormwood mixed with gall, and his soul the subject of worse temptations than the mere thrusting out of the tongue or the jeer and the jibe of the multitude; there where his soul died within him because God forsook him, and he shrieked "Eloi! Eloi! lama sabachthani?" there it was that God said sternly and dreadfully Amen to that sentence, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Beloved, if you

want to see to the fullest degree how God hates sin, and with what vengeance he pursues iniquity, you must see him hunt that sin right into the shelter which it sought to find in his own dear Son. Though it never was his sin, but our sin laid upon him, yet God spared not his own Son. You have only to see how he was smitten of God and afflicted, because the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed, and you will see at once that Jehovah does not reckon sin to be a trifle.

It must have been a very grand sight to stand in the valley between Ebal and Gerizim and to hear the law read, and then to have heard the six tribes upon Gerizim all say to the blessings solemnly, Amen; like a peal of thunder it must have started from the ten thousand lips of the children of Israel. And then how dreadful, in what subdued awe-stricken tones, like the low murmur of a threatening tempest, must have sounded the dreadful Amen from Ebal, when all the threatenings were read. "Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them. And all the people shall say Amen." But mark this word, it was a far more solemn thing when God spake than when the tribes spake, and he did speak upon Calvary in tones the thunder of which reverberate throughout all ages, and are heard in dreadful mutterings in the abyss of hell. Jehovah, whom cherubs sing as Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts," then said "Amen, so let it be! Vengeance, take thy fill! Justice, slay the victim! Let the innocent substitute bleed for men." Our Lord Jesus, so far from destroying the law, came to be God's Amen to its penalty, and to sanction and to establish it as the law of God for ever.

We have not, however, exhausted this topic. Jesus Christ is, as you know, very blessedly God's Amen to all his covenant promises, for is it not written that "all the promises of God in him are yea and in him Amen." The apostle Paul seems to have

hit upon the very spirit of Christ's name, Amen, when he says, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" When God gave his Son he did virtually give all covenant blessings to his people. The gift of Jesus Christ was God's making every promise which had ever gone before the coming of Christ sure and certain. Christ was the wax melted in the fire, upon which God set the stamp of his own honour that he would be true to the covenant engagements which he had made. Brethren, if the saying of Amen upon Mount Gerizim to the blessing of the law had something delightfully cheering and comfortable about it, how much more divinely sweet was Jehovah's Amen when Jesus Christ rose from the dead triumphant, how much more when up the everlasting hills he rode in glorious triumph, leading captivity captive. Devout spirits, come ye hither and mark God's Amen to the blessings of the covenant; see yonder the mighty throng of angels, and hear their song as they sing, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in." Do you desire to hear God's Amen? Hear it as he bids his Son, amidst universal acclamations, sit upon his throne and reign with him, expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. Oh, greatly blessed are you, ye saints who are one with Jesus, for God has blessed him, and therefore you! On high enthroned are ye, O saints, for Christ enthroned stands! Him hath God exalted, and he has exalted all his saints in him. He joys not for himself alone; the meanest Christian has a part in all the glories of the Saviour. The enthronization of Christ is God's solemn declaration and Amen that he will bless all his people, and make them kings and priests to reign for ever and ever.

Once more, Jesus Christ will be God's Amen at the conclusion of this dispensation in the fulness of time. I am not going into curious questions about how this dispensation will end. I

have my own notions about it, other people have theirs. I believe, if some people were as reticent about theirs as I am about mine, they would not sell so many two penny books, nor make so many foolish guesses at futurity. I know just this about that, that Jesus Christ will come in due time, and that when he cometh, whether immediately, or after a millennial reign, two things will surely happen: namely, that the righteous will be rewarded, and that the wicked will be condemned. These two things I can make quite sure of. Now, when God shall put into his dear Son's mouth those words, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world," that will be a most solemn Amen to God's purpose made concerning those saints; indeed, it will be the Amen to the covenant in the whole of its range, and to the entire work of grace from the first to the last: then, as they come streaming up the sky in glorious pomp, to reign with Jesus Christ for ever, death and hell, and the assembled world shall mark with shame and dismay God's Amen to his own eternal purposes, and to the work of his glorified Son. When, turning to the left, the Judge shall say, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire in hell," before the word is spoken, the ungodly will recognize Christ as being "the Amen" to all that God had threatened; in their cries to the rocks to hide them, in their shrieks to the mountains to fall upon them, they will at once discover to assembled multitudes that they perceive Jesus to be "the Amen," making God's threatenings true: and when his voice shall have cursed them for ever, it will be the weighty Amen throughout eternity, the emphatic re-asserting at once of their guilt and of their punishment, that their sentence came from Jesus, that same Jesus who died for sinners, and whom sinners crucified and rejected. Had it come from any other lips the sentence had not been so dreadful; but coming from the man as well as from the God, it shall be humanity assenting to God's

verdict, as well as God declaring and enforcing the sanctions of his law. Oh sinner! may Christ never be God's Amen to you in that sense; but, on the contrary, may you hide in the wounds of Jesus, and find all the blessings in him yea and in him Amen to you!

I have thus said sufficient upon that point if God bless it to you; and so let us turn to our second head.

II. Our Redeemer took this as a personal title to himself. lie called himself "the Amen;" and so he is. Our second point, then, is, THAT HE is OUR AMEN IN HIMSELF. He proved himself to be Amen; the God of truth, sincerity, and faithfulness in his fulfilment of covenant engagements. The Lord Jesus Christ undertook to bring many saints to glory. His Father gave him a people to be his forever; and he undertook, in suretyship engagements, that every one of these should be delivered perfect and complete when they should be required at his hands. He undertook, in order to this, that he would suffer, bleed, and die for his Church; that all her debts should be discharged from his own veins; that a perfect righteousness should be wrought out for her, in which she should stand all beauteous in the sight of God. Brethren, I leave it to your own judgment, you who know the Lord Jesus, whether he has not faithfully kept his engagements. He has been "the Amen" to the full, in this respect. "Lo I come! In the volume of the book it is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O God." From old eternity he declared himself to be ready to go through the work, and when the time came, he was straitened till the work was done. When he was a servant in the house of his Father, he might have gone out free if he had pleased, he might have left the service had he willed, but he said, "I love my Master, and I love my Master's children and so, like a man who would not accept of freedom under the old Jewish law, his ear was fastened to the doorpost of God's house, and he became the

servant of his people for ever. "Mine ear hast thou opened." Beloved, he has fulfilled his service. Seven years of toil for Rachel were achieved by Jacob, and seven years afterwards, and our Master has achieved the same. He has paid the price of his Beloved to the uttermost farthing, and up till now it can be said of him, "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." "Of all whom thou hast given me I have lost none." Let us praise and bless his name as we see him in covenant engagements faithful and true, "the Amen."

He was also "the Amen" in all his teachings. We have already remarked that he constantly commenced with "Verily, verily." The Pharisees in their teachings began with insinuating doubts, beclouding the mind with mystifications, and raising needless difficulties. It was considered to be the right thing for a philosopher never to teach dogmatically; but Christ never spoke in any other way. You find him beginning, "Verily, verily, I say unto you." Christ as teacher does not appeal to tradition, or even to reasoning, but gives himself as his authority. He quotes indeed the authority; of "It is written;" and speaks of the things which he had seen and heard of his Father, but this he states upon the authority of his own oneness with the Father. He comes clad with divine authority, and he does not deign to dispute or to argue, but he claims for his words that they are Amen. We have accepted his teachings I hope in that same spirit. I do not open the evangelists to find Christ's words to cavil over them. I do not turn to the epistles to criticise the teachings of my Lord, nor to raise difficult questions wherewith to wrangle with the great Teacher. The position of a Christian is at his Master's feet, not disputing but receivings not questioning, but believing; and in this sense Christ claims as a prophet and teacher to be "the Amen."

He is also "the Amen" in all his promises. Sinner, I would comfort thee with this reflection. Jesus Christ said, "Come unto

me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." If you come to him, you will not find that he has revoked that promise, but he will say "Amen" in your soul; that promise shall be true to you. He said in the days of his flesh, "The bruised reed I will not break, and the smoking flax I will not quench." Oh thou poor, broken, bruised heart, if thou comest to him he will say Amen to thee, and that shall be true in thy seal as in hundreds of cases in bygone years. These are his own words, which he spake to his servant John: "The Spirit and the Bride say come; and let him that heareth say come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." He says Amen to all those Comes, and when thou comest and art anxious to drink, he will say Amen to thy coming and to thy drinking, for he declares to thee, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." From the throne of God whereon he is highly exalted, he utters the very selfsame sentence now, and says Amen to that which he declared before. Christian, is not this very comforting to thee also, that there is not a word which has gone out of the Saviour's lips which he has ever retracted? "I have not spoken in secret, in the dark places of the earth: I said not to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye my face in vain." No stopping of Christ's bills; they shall be duly honoured when the time comes. If thou gettest a hold of but half a promise, thou shalt find it true. Beware of him who is called "Clip-promise," who will run away with much of the comfort of God's Word; but if thou shouldst even get a clipped promise God will honour it, he will still keep to his Word. "Let God be true, and every man a liar." Thou hast to deal with Jesus Christ, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Therefore be not afraid.

*"His very word of grace is strong
As that which built the skies;
The voice that rolls the stars along*

Speaks all the promises."

I must not, however, tarry here. Jesus Christ is yea and Amen in all his offices. He was a priest to pardon and cleanse once; he is Amen as priest still. He was a King to rule and reign for his people, and to defend them with his mighty arm; he is an Amen King, the same still. He was a prophet of old to foretell good things to come; his lips are most sweet, and drop with honey still — he is an Amen Prophet. He is Amen as to the merit of his blood: —

*"Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power."*

He is Amen as to his righteousness. That sacred robe shall remain most fair and glorious when nature shall decay. He is Amen in every single title which he bears; your Husband, never seeking a divorce; your Head, the neck never being dislocated; your Friend, sticking closer than a brother; your Shepherd, with you in death's dark vale; your Help and your Deliverer; your Castle and your High Tower; the horn of your strength, your confidence, your joy, your all in all, and Amen in all. I must close all this by reminding you that he is Amen with regard to his person. He is still faithful and true, immutably the same. Not less than God! No furrows on that eternal brow — no palsy in that mighty arm — no faintness in that Almighty heart — no lack of fulness in his all-sufficiency — no diminution in the keenness of his eye — no defalcation in the purpose of his heart. Omnipotent, immutable, eternal, omnipresent still! God over all, blessed for ever. O Jesus, we adore thee, thou great Amen. He is the same, too, as to his manhood. Bone of our bone still; in all our afflictions still afflicted. Our brother in ties of blood as much to-day as when he wore a peasant's garb, and said, "Foxes

have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." The same heart of sympathy, the same bowels of compassion still; remembering us, and bidding us remember him. Not for a moment changed because of the change of his condition. Not for an instant unmindful of us because of the harps of angels and the songs of the redeemed. As quick to hear a sigh or catch a tear to-day as when in the days of his flesh he comforted his people and carried the lambs in his bosom. The Amen Saviour! Oh! blessed be his name. Let us worship him as the great Mediator between God and our souls, feeling joy to think that in all this he suffers no shadow of a change.

*"Blessings for ever on the Lamb
Who bore the curse for wretched men;
Let angels sound his sacred name,
And every creature say, AMEN."*

III. But I must roll all this up, and leave you to digest and to enjoy the sweetness of the truths which are contained in that short title, "the Amen;" because I have to close now by saying that THE LORD JESUS IS EXPERIMENTALLY GOD'S AMEN TO EVERY BELIEVING SOUL.

We may say in the first place that he is God's Amen in us. Beloved, it is not impossible to prove the existence of God by argument; it is not altogether difficult to demonstrate the reasonableness of the gospel by syllogism and by logic. None but the man who is deficient of brains, I think, need be long without being assured of the authenticity of Scripture; but let me say to you that all that argument, reasoning, and logic can do for you is less than nothing and vanity. You will doubt in the teeth of argument, and be sceptical in the face of demonstration as long as your heart does not love the truth; your head may be

convinced, but your heart will always supply enough atheism to keep your head at work; and your head will always be willing to receive an abundant supply from that nethermost cavern of your depravity. But let me say to you if you want to know God you must know Christ; if you want to be sure of the truth of the Bible you must believe Jesus; and I warrant you that when you have once looked up and seen incarnate God bearing your sins; when you have thrown yourself flat upon the Rock of Ages, and have felt the inward joy and peace which flow from believing in God, you will have heard an Amen to that old Book, and an Amen to the existence of God, and an Amen to the gospel, which Satan himself can never remove from your remembrance. You will be confident where once you were diffident, you will believe with a Lutheran vigour when once you have laid hold of Jesus Christ. I believe that this is the keynote of all true believing, to lay hold on Jesus Christ.

*"Till God in human flesh
I see My thoughts no comfort find."*

But when I get Christ, my thoughts not only have comfort but they get a solid conviction that the things must be true. Perhaps there are few among you here that are troubled with sceptical doubts, but they will afflict some of us; and I can say with regard to them whenever they come across my soul in any shape or form, I find the short and quick answer is this, I know one thing, namely, that I am not what I used to be. I know that I have entered into a new world. I feel spiritual heavings in my soul, spiritual longings, emotions, desires, to which I was an utter stranger once. I know there has been as great a metamorphosis passed upon me as though a swine should suddenly become a seraph. I know that the very thought of Jesus keeps me back from sin, and impels me in the path of duty. I know

that his name exercises such a charm over me that no magician's wand ever wrought such wonders. My rocky heart melts, my frozen soul dissolves at the touch of his love; and I, a clod of dead earth, suddenly get wings, and fly and commune with the eternal God. Why, that must be true which has done all this for me; it cannot be a lie, it must be true. I feel within myself that my own consciousness must be true, and the Lord Jesus has so interwoven and intertwined himself with my being, nay, overlaid and covered my being, that, though I should doubt all beside, I could not doubt the existence and divine power of my Lord Jesus Christ. Depend on it, dear friend, if you want to know the gospel, you must receive Jesus Christ, and when you know him you know the gospel. Mahomet, you know, is not Mahommedanism; but Jesus is Christianity. Jesus himself is the Bible; Jesus is God's Word. Trust him, and you shall doubt no more.

Next, Jesus Christ is "the Amen," not only in us, but "the Amen" for us. When you pray, dear friend, you say Amen. Did you think of Christ? Did you look to his wounds? Did you offer your prayer through him? Did you ask him to present it before God? Did you expect to be heard by virtue of his intercession? If not, there is no Amen to your prayer. But if you have prayed, though it were but a sigh or a tear, if you were looking to the Cross, Jesus Christ's blood said Amen, and your prayer is as certain to be heard in heaven as it was heard on earth; as sure as it came from your inmost soul and Christ was pleaded in it, the answer must certainly come.

And now I want, dear friends, that Jesus Christ should be God's Amen in all our hearts, as to all the good things of the covenant of grace this morning; I am sure he will be if you receive him. We who have believed have entered into rest. If you have Christ you have entered into rest. "Being justified by faith we have peace with God." You that have Christ, have

peace with God this morning. "Being justified by faith we have peace with God." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;" if you have Christ, you are saved. Christ is God's Amen. Get Christ, and you have the promises; get Jesus, and you are like the man who has an estate and is secure of his property because he holds the title deeds. He says, "I have got the estate." "Where is it?" — he shows you the title deeds. "Oh," says another man, "that is not the estate; that is far away in the north of England." "I have it however," says the owner, and he folds up his deeds, ties them round, and puts them away in his chest. "I have possession of the estate." Well, dear friends, we have heaven, we have God himself, because we have Christ, and Christ is the title deeds of all things. May you

*"Read your title clear,
To mansions in the skies,"*

and the Lord make Jesus to be to your hearts, to-day,
joyfully and
blessedly his own.
Amen.

NINETEEN
AN EARNEST WARNING AGAINST
LUKEWARMNESS

SERMON GIVEN ON JULY 26, 1874

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 3:14-21

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 20

“Unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou, mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou

mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come into him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

REVELATION 3:14— 21.

No Scripture ever wears out. The epistle to the church of Laodicea is not an old letter which may be put into the waste basket and be forgotten; upon its page still glow the words, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." This Scripture was not meant to instruct the Laodiceans only, it has a wider aim. The actual church of Laodicea has passed away, but other Laodiceas still exist—indeed, they are sadly multiplied in our day, and it has ever been the tendency of human nature, however inflamed with the love of God, gradually to chill into lukewarmness. The letter to the Laodiceans is above all others the epistle for the present times.

I should judge that the church at Laodicea was once in a very fervent and healthy condition. Paul wrote a letter to it which did not claim inspiration, and therefore its loss does not render the Scriptures incomplete, for Paul may have written scores of other letters besides. Paul also mentions the church at Laodicea in his letter to the church at Colosse; he was, there-

fore, well acquainted with it, and as he does not utter a word of censure with regard to it, we may infer that the church was at that time in a sound state. In process of time it degenerated, and cooling down from its former ardour it became care less, lax, and indifferent. Perhaps its best men were dead, perhaps its wealth seduced it into worldliness, possibly its freedom from persecution engendered carnal ease, or neglect of prayer made it gradually backslide; but in any case it declined till it was neither cold nor hot. Lest we should ever get into such a state, and lest we should be in that state now, I pray that my discourse may come with power to the hearts of all present, but especially to the consciences of the members of my own church. May God grant that it may tend to the arousing of us all.

I. My first point will be **THE STATE INTO WHICH CHURCHES ARE VERY APT TO FALL.** A church may fall into a condition far other than that for which it has a repute. It may be famous for zeal and yet be lethargic. The address of our Lord begins, "I know thy works," as much as to say, "Nobody else knows you. Men think better of you than you deserve. You do not know yourselves, you think your works to be excellent, but I know them to be very different." Jesus views with searching eyes all the works of his church. The public can only read reports, but Jesus sees for himself. He knows what is done, and how it is done, and why it is done. He judges a church not merely by her external activities, but by her internal pieties; he searches the heart, and tries the reins of the children of men. He is not deceived by glitter, he tests all things, and values only that gold which will endure the fire. Our opinion of ourselves and Christ's opinion of us may be very different, and it is a very sad thing when it is so. It will be melancholy indeed if we stand out as a church notable for earnestness and distinguished for success, and yet are not really fervent in spirit, or eager in soul-winning. A lack of vital energy where there seems to be most

strength put forth, a lack of real love to Jesus where apparently there is the greatest devotedness to him, are sad signs of fearful degeneracy. Churches are very apt to put the best goods into the window, very apt to make a fair show in the flesh, and, like men of the world, they try to make a fine figure upon a very slender estate. Great reputations have often but slender foundations, and lovers of the truth lament that it should be so. Not only is it true of churches, but of every one of us as individuals, that often our reputation is in advance of our deserts. Men often live on their former credit, and trade upon their past characters, having still a name to live, though they are indeed dead. To be slandered is a dire affliction, but it is, upon the whole, a less evil than to be thought better than we are; in the one case we have a promise to comfort us, in the second we are in danger of self-conceit. I speak as unto wise men, judge ye how far this may apply to us.

The condition described in our text is, secondly, one of mournful indifference and carelessness. They were not cold, but they were not hot; they were not infidels, yet they were not earnest believers; they did not oppose the gospel, neither did they defend it; they were not working mischief, neither were they doing any great good; they were not disreputable in moral character, but they were not distinguished for holiness; they were not irreligious, but they were not enthusiastic in piety nor eminent for zeal: they were what the world calls "Moderates," they were of the Broad-church school, they were neither bigots nor Puritans, they were prudent and avoided fanaticism, respectable and averse to excitement. Good things were maintained among them, but they did not make too much of them; they had prayer-meetings, but there were few present, for they liked quiet evenings at home: when more attended the meetings they were still very dull, for they did their praying very deliberately and were afraid of being too excited. They were

content to have all things done decently and in order, but vigour and zeal they considered to be vulgar. Such churches have schools, Bible-classes, preaching rooms, and all sorts of agencies; but they might as well be without them, for no energy is displayed and no good comes of them. They have deacons and elders who are excellent pillars of the church, if the chief quality of pillars be to stand still, and exhibit no motion or emotion. They have ministers who may be the angels of the churches, but if so they have their wings closely clipped, for they do not fly very far in preaching the everlasting gospel, and they certainly are not flames of fire: they may be shining lights of eloquence, but they certainly are not burning lights of grace, setting men's hearts on fire. In such communities everything is done in a half-hearted, listless, dead-and-alive way, as if it did not matter much whether it was done or not. It makes one's flesh creep to see how sluggishly they move: I long for a knife to cut their red tape to pieces, and for a whip to lay about their shoulders to make them bestir themselves. Things are respectably done, the rich families are not offended, the sceptical party is conciliated, and the good people are not quite alienated: things are made pleasant all round. The right things are done, but as to doing them with all your might, and soul, and strength, a Laodicean church has no notion of what that means. They are not so cold as to abandon their work, or to give up their meetings for prayer, or to reject the gospel; if they did so, then they could be convinced of their error and brought to repentance; but on the other hand they are neither hot for the truth, nor hot for conversions, nor hot for holiness, they are not fiery enough to burn the stubble of sin, nor zealous enough to make Satan angry, nor fervent enough to make a living sacrifice of themselves upon the altar of their God, They are "neither cold nor hot."

This is a horrible state, because it is one which in a church

wearing a good repute renders that reputation a lie. When other churches are saying, "See how they prosper! see what they do for God!" Jesus sees that the church is doing his work in a slovenly, make-believe manner, and he considers justly that it is deceiving its friends. If the world recognises such a people as being very distinctly an oldfashioned puritanic church, and yet there is unholy living among them, and careless walking, and a deficiency of real piety, prayer, liberality, and zeal, then the world itself is being deceived, and that too in the worst way, because it is led to judge falsely concerning Christianity, for it lays all these faults upon the back of religion, and cries out, "It is all a farce! The thing is a mere pretence! Christians are all hypocrites!" I fear there are churches of this sort. God grant we may not be numbered with them!

In this state of the church there is much self-glorification, for Laodicea said, "I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." The members say, "Everything goes on well, what more do we want? All is right with us." This makes such a condition very hopeless, because reproofs and rebukes fall without power, where the party rebuked can reply, "We do not deserve your censures, such warnings are not meant for us." If you stand up in the pulpit and talk to sleepy churches, as I pretty frequently do, and speak very plainly, they often have the honesty to say, "There is a good deal of truth in what the man has said:" but if I speak to another church, which really is half asleep, but which thinks itself to be quite a model of diligence, then the rebuke glides oft like oil down a slab of marble, and no result comes of it. Men are less likely to repent when they are in the middle passage between hot and cold, than if they were in the worst extremes of sin. If they were like Saul of Tarsus, enemies of God, they might be converted; but if, like Gamaliel, they are neither opposed nor favouring, they will probably remain as they are till they die. The gospel converts a

sincerely superstitious Luther, but Erasmus, with his pliant spirit, flippant, and full of levity, remains unmoved. There is more hope of warming the cold than the lukewarm.

When churches get into the condition of half-hearted faith, tolerating the gospel, but having a sweet tooth for error, they do far more mischief to their age than downright heretics.

It is harder a great deal to work for Jesus with a church which is lukewarm than it would be to begin without a church. Give me a dozen earnest spirits and put me down anywhere in London, and by God's good help we will soon cause the wilderness and the solitary place to rejoice; but give me the whole lot of you, half-hearted, undecided, and unconcerned, what can I do? You will only be a drag upon a man's zeal and earnestness. Five thousand members of a church all lukewarm will be five thousand impediments, but a dozen earnest, passionate spirits, determined that Christ shall be glorified and souls won, must be more than conquerors; in their very weakness and fewness will reside capacities for being the more largely blessed of God. Better nothing than lukewarmness.

Alas, this state of lukewarmness is so congenial with human nature that it is hard to fetch men from it. Cold makes us shiver, and great heat causes us pain, but a tepid bath is comfort itself. Such a temperature suits human nature. The world is always at peace with a lukewarm church, and such a church is always pleased with itself. Not too worldly,—no! We have our limits! There are certain amusements which of course a Christian must give up, but we will go quite up to the line, for why are we to be miserable? We are not to be so greedy as to be called miserly, but we will give as little as we can to the cause. We will not be altogether absent from the house of God, but we will go as seldom as we can. We will not altogether forsake the poor people to whom we belong, but we will also go to the world's church, so as to get admission into better society, and find fash-

ionable friends for our children. How much of this there is abroad! Compromise is the order of the day. Thousands try to hold with the hare and run with the hounds, they are for God and Mammon, Christ and Belial, truth and error, and so are “neither hot nor cold.” Do I speak somewhat strongly? Not so strongly as my Master, for he says, “I will spue thee out of my mouth.” He is nauseated with such conduct, it sickens him, and he will not endure it. In an earnest, honest, fervent heart nausea is created when we fall in with men who dare not give up their profession, and yet will not live up to it; who cannot altogether forsake the work of God, but yet do it in a sluggard’s manner, trifling with that which ought to be done in the best style for so good a Lord and so gracious a Saviour. Many a church has fallen into a condition of indifference, and when it does so it generally becomes the haunt of worldly professors, a refuge for people who want an easy religion, which enables them to enjoy the pleasures of sin and the honours of piety at the same time; where things are free and easy, where you are not expected to do much, or give much, or pray much, or to be very religious; where the minister is not so precise as the old school divines; a more liberal people, of broad views, free-thinking and free-acting, where there is full tolerance for sin, and no demand for vital godliness. Such churches applaud cleverness in a preacher; as for his doctrine, that is of small consequence, and his love to Christ and zeal for souls are very secondary. He is a clever fellow, and can speak well, and that suffices. This style of thing is all too common, yet we are expected to hold our tongue, for the people are very respectable. The Lord grant that we may be kept clear of such respectability!

We have already said that this condition of indifference is attended with perfect self-complacency. The people who ought to be mourning are rejoicing, and where they should hang out

signals of distress they are flaunting the banners of triumph. "We are rich, we are adding to our numbers, enlarging our schools, and growing on all sides; we have need of nothing. What can a church require that we have not in abundance?" Yet their spiritual needs are terrible. This is a sad state for a church to be in. Spiritually poor and proud. A church crying out to God because it feels itself in a backsliding state; a church mourning its deficiency, a church pining and panting to do more for Christ, a church burning with zeal for God, and therefore quite discontented with what it has been able to do; this is the church which God will bless: but that which writes itself down as a model for others, is very probably grossly mistaken and is in a sad plight. This church, which was so rich in its own esteem, was utterly bankrupt in the sight of the Lord. It had no real joy in the Lord, it had mistaken its joy in itself for that. It had no real beauty of holiness upon it, it had mistaken its formal worship and fine building and harmonious singing for that. It had no deep understanding of the truth and no wealth of vital godliness, it had mistaken carnal wisdom and outward profession for those precious things. It was poor in secret prayer, which is the strength of any church, it was destitute of communion with Christ, which is the very life blood of religion; but it had the outward semblance of these blessings, and walked in a vain show. There are churches which are poor as Lazarus as to true religion, and yet are clothed in scarlet and fare sumptuously every day upon the mere form of godliness. Spiritual leanness exists side by side with vain-glory. Contentment as to worldly goods makes men rich, but contentment with our spiritual condition is the index of poverty.

Once more, this church of Laodicea had fallen into a condition which had chased away its Lord. The text tells us that Jesus said, "I stand at the door and knock." That is not the position which our Lord occupies in reference to a truly flourishing

church. If we are walking aright with him, he is in the midst of the church, dwelling there, and revealing himself to his people. His presence makes our worship to be full of spirituality and life; he meets his servants at the table, and there spreads them a feast upon his body and his blood; it is he who puts power and energy into all our church-action, and causes the word to sound out from our midst. True saints abide in Jesus and he in them. Oh, brethren, when the Lord is in a church, it is a happy church, a holy church, a mighty church, and a triumphant church; but we may grieve him till he will say, "I will go and return to my place, until they acknowledge their offence and seek my face." Oh, you that know my Lord, and have power with him, entreat him not to go away from us. He can see much about us as a people which grieves his Holy Spirit, much about any one of us to provoke him to anger. Hold him, I pray you, and do not let him go, or if he be gone, bring him again to his mother's house, into the chamber of her that bare him, where, with holy violence, we will detain him and say, "Abide with us, for thou art life and joy, and all in all to us as a church. Ichabod is written across our house if thou be gone, for thy presence is our glory and thy absence will be our shame." Churches may become like the temple when the glory of the Lord had left the holy place because the image of jealousy was set up and the house was defiled. What a solemn warning is that which is contained in Jeremiah vii. 12 — 15 :— "But go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel. And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the Lord, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not; therefore I will do unto this house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh. And I will cast you out of my

sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim.”

II. Now let us consider, secondly, THE DANGER OF SUCH A STATE.

The great danger is, first, to be rejected of Christ. He puts it, “I will spue thee out of my mouth,”— as disgusting him, and causing him nausea. Then the church must first be in his mouth, or else it could not be spued from it. What does this mean? Churches are in Christ’s mouth in several ways, they are used by him as his testimony to the world, he speaks to the world through their lives and ministries. He does as good as say, “O sinners, if ye would see what my religion can do, see here a godly people banded together in my fear and love, walking in peace and holiness.” He speaks powerfully by them, and makes the world see and know that there is a true power in the gospel of the grace of God. But when the church becomes neither cold nor hot he does not speak by her, she is no witness for him. When God is with a church the minister’s words come out of Christ’s mouth. “Out of his mouth went a two-edged sword,” says John in the Revelation, and that “two-edged sword” is the gospel which we preach. When God is with a people they speak with divine power to the world, but if we grow lukewarm Christ says, “Their teachers shall not profit, for I have not sent them, neither am I with them. Their word shall be as water spilt on the ground, or as the whistling of the wind.” This is a dreadful thing. Better far for me to die than to be spued out of Christ’s mouth.

Then he also ceases to plead for such a church. Christ’s special intercession is not for all men, for he says of his people, “I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me.” I do not think Christ ever prays for the church of Rome— what would he pray for, but her total overthrow? Other churches are nearing the same fate; they are not

clear in his truth or honest in obedience to his word: they follow their own devices, they are lukewarm. But there are churches for which he is pleading, for he has said, "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." Mighty are his pleadings for those he really loves, and countless are the blessings which come in consequence. It will be an evil day when he casts a church out of that interceding mouth, and leaves her unrepresented before the throne because she is none of his. Do you not tremble at such a prospect? Will you not ask for grace to return to your first love? I know that the Lord Jesus will never leave off praying for his own elect, but for churches as corporate bodies he may cease to pray, because they become anti-Christian, or are mere human gatherings, but not elect assemblies, such as the church of God ought to be. Now this is the danger of any church if it declines from its first ardour and becomes lukewarm. "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

What is the other danger? This first comprehends all, but another evil is hinted at,— such a church will be left to its fallen condition, to become wretched,— that is to say, miserable, unhappy, divided, without the presence of God, and so without delight in the ways of God, lifeless, spiritless, dreary, desolate, full of schisms, devoid of grace, and I know not what beside, that may come under the term "wretched." Then the next word is "miserable," which might better be rendered "pitiable." Churches which once were a glory shall become a shame. Whereas men said, "The Lord has done great things for them," they shall now say, "see how low they have fallen! What a change has come over the place! What emptiness and

wretchedness! What a blessing rested there for so many years, but what a contrast now!" Pity will take the place of congratulation, and scorn will follow upon admiration. Then it will be "poor " in membership, poor in effort, poor in prayer, poor in gifts and graces, poor in everything. Perhaps some rich people will be left to keep up the semblance of prosperity, but all will be empty, vain, void, Christless, lifeless. Philosophy will fill the pulpit with chaff, the church will be a mass of worldliness, the congregation an assembly of vanity. Next, they will become blind, they will not see themselves as they are, they will have no eye upon the neighbourhood to do it good, no eye to the coming of Christ, no eye for his glory. They will say "We see," and yet be blind as bats. Ultimately they will become "naked," their shame will be seen by all, they will be a proverb in everybody's mouth. "Call that a church!" says one. "Is that a church of Jesus Christ?" cries a second. Those dogs that dared not open their mouths against Israel when the Lord was there will begin to howl when he is gone, and everywhere will the sound be heard, "How are the mighty fallen, how are the weapons of war broken."

In such a case as that the church will fail of overcoming, for it is "to him that overcometh " that a seat upon Christ's throne is promised; but that church will come short of victory. It shall be written concerning it even as of the children of Ephraim, that being armed and carrying bows they turned their backs in the day of battle. "Ye did run well," says Paul to the Galatians, "what did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" Such a church had a grand opportunity, but it was not equal to the occasion, its members were born for a great work, but inasmuch as they were unfaithful, God put them aside and used other means. He raised up in their midst a flaming testimony for the gospel, and the light thereof was cast athwart the ocean, and gladdened the nations, but the people were not worthy of it, or

true to it, and therefore he took the candlestick out of its place, and left them in darkness. May God prevent such an evil from coming upon us: but such is the danger to all churches if they degenerate into listless indifference.

III. Thirdly, I have to speak of THE REMEDIES WHICH THE LORD EMPLOYS. I do earnestly pray that what I say may come home to all here, especially to every one of the members of this church, for it has come very much home to me, and caused great searching of heart in my own soul, and yet I do not think I am the least zealous among you. I beseech you to judge yourselves, that you be not judged. Do not ask me if I mean anything personal. I am personal in the most emphatic sense. I speak of you and to you in the plainest way. Some of you show plain symptoms of being lukewarm, and God forbid that I should flatter you, or be unfaithful to you. I am aiming at personality, and I earnestly want each-beloved brother and sister here to take home each affectionate rebuke. And you who come from other churches, whether in America or elsewhere, you want arousing quite as much as we do, your churches are not better than ours, some of them are not so good, and I speak to you also, for you need to be stirred up to nobler things.

Note, then, the first remedy. Jesus gives a clear discovery as to the church's true state. He says to it— "Thou art lukewarm, thou art wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." I rejoice to see people willing to know the truth, but most men do not wish to know it, and this is an ill sign. When a man tells you that he has not looked at his ledger, or day-book, or held a stock-taking for this twelve months, you know whereabouts he is, and you say to your manager, "Have you an account with him? Then keep it as close as you can." When a man dares not know the worst about his case, it is certainly a bad one, but he that is right before God is thankful to be told what he is and where he is. Now, some of you know the faults

of other people, and in watching this church you have observed weak points in many places,— have you wept over them? Have you prayed over them? If not, you have not watched as you should do for the good of your brethren and sisters, and, perhaps, have allowed evils to grow which ought to have been rooted up: you have been silent when you should have kindly and earnestly spoken to the offenders, or made your own example a warning to them. Do not judge your brother, but judge yourself: if you have any severity, use it on your own conduct and heart. We must pray the Lord to use this remedy, and make us know just where we are. We shall never get right as long as we are confident that we are so already. Self-complacency is the death of repentance.

Our Lord's next remedy is gracious counsel. He says, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire." Does not that strike you as being very like the passage in Isaiah, "Come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price"? It is so, and it teaches us that one remedy for lukewarmness is to begin again just as we began at first. We were at a high temperature at our first conversion. What joy, what peace, what delight, what comfort, what enthusiasm we had when first we knew the Lord! We bought gold of him then for nothing, let us go and buy again at the same price.

If religion has not been genuine with us till now, or if we have been adding to it great lumps of shining stuff which we thought was gold and was not, let us now go to the heavenly mint and buy gold tried in the fire, that we may be really rich. Come, let us begin again, each one of us. Inasmuch as we may have thought we were clothed and yet we were naked, let us hasten to him again, and at his own price, which is no price, procure the robe which he has wrought of his own righteousness, and that goodly raiment of his Spirit, which will clothe us with the beauty of the Lord. If, moreover, we have

come to be rather dim in the eye, and no longer look up to God and see his face, and have no bright vision of the glory to be revealed, and cannot look on sinners with weeping eyes, as we once did, let us go to Jesus for the eye-salve, just as we went when we were stone blind at first, and the Lord will open our eyes again, and we shall behold him in clear vision as in days gone by. The word from Jesus is, "Come near to me, I pray you, my brethren. If you have wandered from me, return; if you have been cold to me I am not cold to you, my heart is the same to you as ever, come back to me, my brethren. Confess your evil deeds, receive my forgiveness, and henceforth let your hearts burn towards me, for I love you still and will supply all your needs." That is good counsel, let us take it.

Now comes a third remedy, sharp and cutting, but sent in love, namely, rebukes and chastenings. Christ will have his favoured church walk with great care, and if she will not follow him fully by being shown wherein she has erred, and will not repent when kindly counselled, he then betakes himself to some sharper means. "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten." The word here used for "love" is a very choice one; it is one which signifies an intense personal affection. Now, there are some churches which Christ loves very specially, favouring them above others, doing more for them than for others, and giving them more prosperity; they are the darlings of his heart, his Benjamins. Now, it is a very solemn thing to be dearly loved by God. It is a privilege to be coveted, but mark you, the man who is so honoured occupies a position of great delicacy. The Lord thy God is a jealous God, and he is most jealous where he shows most love. The Lord lets some men escape scot free for awhile after doing many evil things, but if they had been his own elect he would have visited them with stripes long before. He is very jealous of those whom he has chosen to lean upon his bosom and to be his familiar friends. Your servant may do

many things which could not be thought of by your child or your wife; and so is it with many who profess to be servants of God— they live a very lax life, and they do not seem to be chastened for it, but if they were the Lord's own peculiarly beloved ones he would not endure such conduct from them. Now mark this, if the Lord exalts a church, and gives it a special blessing, he expects more of it, more care of his honour, and more zeal for his glory than he does of any other church; and when he does not find it, what will happen? Why, because of his very love he will rebuke it with hard sermons, sharp words, and sore smittings of conscience. If these do not arouse it he will take down the rod and deal out chastenings. Do you know how the Lord chastens churches? Paul says, "For this cause some are sickly among you, and many sleep." Bodily sickness is often sent in discipline upon churches, and losses, and crosses, and troubles are sent among the members, and sometimes leanness in the pulpit, breakings out of heresy and divisions in the pew, and lack of success in all church work. All these are smittings with the rod. It is very sad, but sometimes that rod does not fall on that part of the church which does the wrong. Sometimes God may take the best in the church, and chasten them for the wrong of others. You say, "How can that be right?" Why, because they are the kind of people who will be most benefited by it. If a vine wants the knife, it is not the branch that bears very little fruit which is trimmed, but the branch which bears much fruit is purged because it is worth purging. In their case the chastening is a blessing and a token of love. Sorrow is often brought upon Christians by the sins of their fellow-members, and many an aching heart there is in this world that I know of, of brethren and sisters who love the Lord and want to see souls converted, but they can only sigh and cry because nothing is done. Perhaps they have a minister who does not believe the gospel, and they have fellow-members who do not care whether

the minister believes it or not, they are all asleep together except those few zealous souls who besiege the throne of grace day and night, and they are the ones who bear the burden of the lukewarm church. Oh, if the chastening comes here, whoever bears it, may the whole body be the better for it, and may we never rest till the church begins to glow with the sacred fire of God, and boil with enthusiastic desire for his glory.

The last remedy, however, is the best of all to my mind. I love it best and desire to make it my food when it is not my medicine. The best remedy for backsliding churches, is more communion with Christ. "Behold," saith he, "I stand at the door and knock." I have known this text preached upon to sinners numbers of times as though Christ knocked at their door and they had to open it, and so on. The preacher has never managed to keep to free grace for this reason, that the text was not meant to be so used, and if men will ride a text the wrong way, it will not go. This text belongs to the church of God, not to the unconverted. It is addressed to the Laodicean church. There is Christ outside the church, driven there by her unkindness, but he has not gone far away, he loves his church too much to leave her altogether, he longs to come back, and therefore he waits at the doorpost. He knows that the church will never be restored till he comes back, and he desires to bless her, and so he stands waiting, knocking and knocking, again and again; he does not merely knock once, but he stands knocking by earnest sermons, by providences, by impressions upon the conscience, by the quickenings of his Holy Spirit; and while he knocks he speaks, he uses all means to awaken his church. Most condescendingly and graciously does he do this, for having threatened to spue her out of his mouth, he might have said, "I will get me gone; and I will never come back again to thee," that would have been natural and just; but how gracious he is when, having expressed his disgust he says, "Disgusted as I am with

your condition, I do not wish to leave you; I have taken my presence from you, but I love you, and therefore I knock at your door, and wish to be received into your heart. I will not force myself upon you, I want you voluntarily to open the door to me." Christ's presence in a church is always a very tender thing. He never is there against the will of the church, it cannot be, for he lives in his people's wills and hearts, and "worketh in them to will and to do of his own good pleasure." He does not break bolt and bar and come in as he often does into a sinner's heart, carrying the soul by storm, because the man is dead in sin, and Christ must do it all, or the sinner will perish; but he is here speaking to living men and women, who ought also to be loving men and women, and he says, "I wish to be among you, open the door to me." We ought to open the door at once, and say, "Come in, good Lord, we grieve to think we should ever have put thee outside that door at all."

And then see what promises he gives. He says he will come and sup with us. Now, in the East, the supper was the best meal of the day, it was the same as our dinner; so that we may say that Christ will come and dine with us. He will give us a rich feast, for he himself is the daintiest and most plenteous of all feasts for perishing souls. He will come and sup with us, that is, we shall be the host and entertain him: but then he adds, "and he with me," that is, he will be the host and entertain us. So we will change places; we will be host and guest by turns. We will give him of our best, but poor fare is that, too poor for him, and yet he will partake of it. Then he shall be host, and we will be guest, and oh, how we will feast on what he gives! Christ comes, and brings the supper with him, and all we do is to find the room. The Master says to us, "Where is the guest chamber?" and then he makes ready and spreads his royal table. Now, if these be the terms on which we are to have a feast together, we will most willingly fling open the doors of our

hearts and say, "Come in, good Lord." He says to you, "Children, have you any meat?" and if you are obliged to say "No, Lord," he will come in unto you none the less readily, for there are the fish, the net is ready to break, it is so full, and here are more upon the coals ready. I warrant you, if we sup with him, we shall be lukewarm no longer. The men who live where Jesus is soon feel their hearts burning. It is said of a piece of scented clay by the old Persian moralist that the clay was taken up and questioned. "How earnest thou to smell so sweetly, being nothing but common clay?" and it replied, "I laid for many a year in the sweet society of a rose, until at last I drank in its perfume;" and we may say to every warm-hearted Christian, "How earnest thou so warm?" and his answer will be, "My heart bubbleth up with a good matter, for I speak of the things which I have made touching the King. I have been with Jesus, and I have learned of him."

Now, brethren and sisters, what can I say to move you to take this last medicine? I can only say, take it, not only because of the good it will do you, but because of the sweetness of it. I have heard say of some persons that they were pledged not to take wine except as a medicine, but then they were very pleased when they were ill: and so if this be the medicine, "I will come and sup with him, and he with me," we may willingly confess our need of so delicious a remedy. Need I press it on you? May I not rather urge each brother as soon as he gets home to-day to see whether he cannot enter into fellowship with Jesus? and may the Spirit of God help him!

This is my closing word, there is something for us to do in this matter. We must examine ourselves, and we must confess the fault if we have declined in grace. And then we must not talk about setting the church right, we must pray for grace each one for himself, for the text does not say, "If the church will open the door," but "If any man hear my voice and open the

door." It must be done by individuals: the church will only get right by each man getting right. Oh, that we might get back into an earnest zeal for our Lord's love and service, and we shall only do so by listening to his rebukes, and then falling into his arms, clasping him once again, and saying, "My Lord and my God." That healed Thomas, did it not? Putting his fingers into the print of the nails, putting his hand into the side, that cured him. Poor, unbelieving, staggering Thomas only had to do that and he became one of the strongest of believers, and said, "My Lord and my God." You will love your Lord till your soul is as coals of juniper if you will daily commune with him. Come close to him, and once getting close to him, never go away from him any more. The Lord bless you, dear brethren, the Lord bless you in this thing.

TWENTY LUKEWARMNESS

SERMON GIVEN ON DECEMBER 11, 1860

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 3:15-16

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 48

“I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth.”

REVELATION 3:15-16.

IF this had been an utterance of mine it would have been accounted vulgar: as a sentence of Scripture, I suppose it may be permitted to escape the censure of fastidious modern critics. The vernacular tongue and the homely figure- may be decried as vulgarities; but if so, it will be by those whose tastes have been ill-schooled. A vicious refinement has come into

vogue. If men call things by their right names, and use good old Saxon words, they are perpetually brought under the lash for having indulged in vulgarities. A return to such "vulgarities" in the pulpit would be a return to power. I would far rather have back again the homely language of Hugh Latimer, with all its singularity, — and, I must confess, with some of its grossness, — than have the namby-pamby style of modern times, in which sacred things are spoken of as if they were only meant to be whispered in drawing-rooms, and not to be uttered where men meet in everyday life. The fact is, the Bible is a book which deals with things as they are, — a book which, just like all God's works, is glorious because it is natural and simple. God has not polished the rocks in the valleys, he has not set the mountains all in order, nor has he yet been pleased to make all parts of the earth just as fair and beautiful as if they had been intended to form a lovely landscape; but, at least, in some places, he has hewn them out, and left them rough and rugged, to stand in all their naked glory. So is it with this Book of God. There are things in it at which the too-polite shrug their shoulders; — not so many, perhaps, in the original as in our translation; — but, still, sufficient to shock a prudish taste. The Bible is none the less chaste because it scorns to call foul things by fair names. I love the Word of God because, while it is a God-like Book, it is also a man like Book. In all the glory of his infinite wisdom, the Lord has written to us this divine message in the rugged grandeur and sublime simplicity of language which even a child can comprehend.

The Lord Jesus here uses a plain, homely metaphor. As tepid water makes a man's stomach heave, so lukewarm profession is nauseous to the Almighty. He could better endure either the coldness of apathy or the warmth of enthusiasm; but the man who is lukewarm in religion moves him to the deepest loathing. He vomits him forth from his mouth. His very name

shall be dismissed from the lips, of the Lord with an abhorrence the most sickening that fancy can paint. It is an utterance so strong that no sentence of the most vehement and impassioned orator could rival it. There is such a depth of disgust in this warning against lukewarmness that I know of no figure within the range of imagination, and no words in the whole vocabulary of language, which could have conveyed the meaning of "Jesus Christ, who is the faithful Witness," so fully, or with such terrible force.

I am going to try to show you, from this text, first, *some reasons why lukewarmness in religion is so distasteful to Christ*, and then to point out to you *some dissuasives against lukewarmness*, urging you, to be fervent in your Master's cause.

I. First, then, I am to give you **SOME REASONS WHY LUKEWARM RELIGION IS SO DISTASTEFUL TO THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.**

And, first, let me say that it is so *because it is a direct insult to the Lord Jesus Christ*. If I boldly say that I do not believe what he teaches, I have given him the lie. But if I say to him, "I believe what thou teachest, but I do not think it of sufficient importance for me to disturb myself much about it," I do, in fact, more wilfully resist his Word; I as much as say to him, "If it be true, yet is it a thing which I so despise, and consider so contemptible, that I will not give my heart to it." Did Jesus Christ think salvation of such importance that he must needs come from heaven to earth to work it out? Hid he think the gospel, which he preached, so worthy to be made known that he must needs spend his life in proclaiming it? Did he think the redemption, which he wrought out, to be so invaluable that he must needs shed his own precious blood in order to complete it? Then, surely, HE was in earnest; so, if I profess to believe the truths that he taught, and yet am indifferent, do I not insult Christ by seeming to insinuate that there was no need for him

to be in such dead earnest, — that, in fact, he laid these things too deeply to heart? His intense zeal was not on his own account, but on behalf of others; and, according to all reason, those who are the interested parties, for whom Christ's solemn engagements were undertaken, should be even more earnest than he himself was, if that could be possible. Yet, instead of that being the case, here is Christ in earnest, and we — too many of us — are lukewarm, "neither cold nor hot." This lukewarmness doth not merely seem to give God the lie, it doth not merely appear to censure Christ, but it doth, as it were, tell him that the things, which he thought were so valuable, are of no worth in our esteem, and so it doth insult him to his face.

O my brethren and sisters, have you ever really thought what an insult it is to God when we come before him with lukewarm prayers? There stands the heavenly mercy-seat; the road to it is sprinkled with the precious blood of Jesus, yet we come to it with hearts that are cold, or we approach it leaving our hearts behind us. We kneel in the attitude of prayer, yet we do not pray. We prattle out certain words, we express thoughts which are not our real desires, we feign wants that we do not feel. Do we not thus degrade the mercy-seat? We make it, as it were, a common lounging-place, rather than an awful wrestling-place, once besprinkled with blood, and often to be besprinkled with the sweat of our fervent supplication. When we come to the house of God, to which Jesus Christ hath invited us as to the banqueting-house full of rich provisions, do we not come up, full often, just as we go to our shops, — nay, not with so much earnestness as we take with us to the Exchange or to the counting-house? What do we thus seem to say but that God's house is a common place, that the provision thereof is but ordinary food, and that the solemn engagements of God's sanctuary are but everyday things, not worthy of the zeal and energy of a sensible man, but only meet to be attended

to with lukewarmness of spirit. I think, if I were to pause longer here, I could prove to you that I went not too far when I said that lukewarmness is an insult to God. It insults him in all that is dear to him by casting a disparagement upon everything which he would have us to believe to be precious.

Does the Lord Jesus deserve such treatment at our hands? May he not well say to us, if we are lukewarm, "I would thou wert cold or hot"? O Jesus, thy heart was full of love to those in whom there was nothing lovely! Thou didst leave the glories of thy Father's house, though there was no necessity for thee to do' so, save the divine necessity which was found in thine own heart, for thou didst love thy Church so much that thou didst become bone of her bone and flesh of her flesh. Thou didst fight her enemies; thou didst rescue her out of the hand of him who was stronger than she was; thou didst pour out thy life's blood as the ransom price for her redemption. Thy pangs were grievous, thy sufferings were bitter, thine anguish was extreme. I look up to thy thorn-crowned brow, I gaze into thy marred face, and see those eyes red with weeping, and those emaciated cheeks, and I say, "O Jesus, thou art worthy of the best place in the human heart! Thou oughtest to be loved as never one was loved before. If there be flames of love to thee in my heart, let them burn like coals of juniper, and let them be fanned to a most vehement heat." Oh, if it is possible for us ever to feel warm emotions, we ought to feel it here!

Is it not a sad thing that, after all Christ's love to us, we should repay it with lukewarm love to him? Which would you rather have, — lukewarm love or positive hatred? Perhaps you have but little choice with regard to most people; but were it one very dear t-o you, — the partner of your life, for instance, — lukewarm love would be no love at all. What but misery could there be in a family where there was only lukewarm love? Is a father contented with half-hearted affection from his children?

In those relationships, we give all our heart; but with regard to Christ, who has a far greater claim on us than husband, or father, or mother, or brother, how is it that we dare to offer him a distant bow, a cool recognition, a chill, inconstant, wavering heart? Let it be so no longer, beloved. O my brethren, I conjure you, by his agony and bloody sweat, by his cross and passion, by all the pangs that went through his sacred body, and by the deeper anguish of his inmost soul, I beseech you, either love him or hate him; either drive him from the door of your heart, and let him know that you are not his friend; or else give him, a whole heart full of affection, almost ready to burst with the fervour of your love toward him!

But though these two things — insult and ingratitude to Christ — would be quite sufficient to justify the strong expressions in our text, let me remind you, further, that *the lukewarm professor compromises God, in the eyes of the world, by all that he does and says*. If a man be an infidel, openly profane, known to have no connection with Christ and his cause, let him do what he may, he brings no scandal on the Saviour's name. He has no fear of God before his eyes, he is in open enmity against the Most High; and, therefore, though he is rebellious and wicked, full of sedition and blasphemy, yet he does not compromise the dignity of God. But when the lukewarm professor of Christianity goes forth before ungodly men, they say, "This man pretends to be a child of God; he professes to have been washed in the blood of Christ; he stands before us, and challenges our observation as one who declares that he is a new creature in Christ Jesus. He tells us that he is the workmanship of the Holy Ghost, that he has been begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection, of Jesus Christ from the dead." Now, whatever that man does, the world considers his acts to be those of a new creature in Christ Jesus, — to be, in fact, acts inspired by God's Spirit within him. The world does not make distinc-

tions, as we do, between the old Adam and the new. Their reason does not endorse our beliefs, true though they are, concerning the old and the new natures. Men of the world look at us as a whole, and if they see anything wrong in our principles or practice, they set it down at once to the account of our religion, and charge it with inconsistency.

Now, lukewarm professor, what do worldlings see in you? They see a man, who says he is going to heaven, but who is only travelling at a snail's pace. He professes to believe that there is a hell, yet he has tearless eyes, and never seeks to snatch souls from going down into the pit. They see before them one who has to deal with eternal realities, yet he is but half awake; one who professes to have passed through a transformation so mysterious and wonderful that there must be, if it is true, a vast change in the outward life as the result of it; yet they see him as much like themselves as can be. He may be morally consistent in his general behaviour, but they see no energy in his religious character. When they hear a solemn, stirring sermon concerning the wrath of God, they say, "It is all very well for the minister to appeal to our emotions, but what does it matter? The people, who constantly hear him, are not in earnest; the *saints*, who profess to believe what he says, trifle over it, and are, no doubt, in their hearts, as incredulous as we are ourselves." Let the minister be as earnest as ever he may, the lukewarmness of professors to a large extent neutralizes any effect which his ministry produces, because the world will judge the church, not so much by the pulpit as by the pew. Worldlings say, by their conduct, if not in so many words, "There is no need for us to make any stir about religion; these 'saints' take it remarkably easy, yet they think all will be well; we do quite as much as they do. They seem to think that, after all, it would be fanaticism to look upon the things that they hear from the preacher as facts; they do not act as if they were realities; and so," say they,

“doubtless they are not realities; and, as one form of religion is as good as another, and there is nothing of value in any one of them, we see no reason why we should have any religion at all.”

Thus, the careless worldling is lulled to sleep by the lukewarm professor, who, in this respect, acts the part of the syren to the sinner, playing sweet music in his ears, and even helping to lure him to the rocks where he will be destroyed. This is a solemn matter, beloved. In this way, great damage is done to the cause of truth; and God’s name and God’s honour are compromised by inconsistent professors. I pray you either to give up your profession, or to be true to it. If you really are God’s people, then serve him with all your might; but if Baal be your god, then serve him. If the flesh be worth pleasing, then serve the flesh; but if God be Lord paramount, then cleave to him. Oh, I beseech and entreat you, as you love your own souls, do not play fast and loose with godliness! Either let it alone, or else let it saturate you through and through. Either possess it, or cease to profess it. The great curse of the church — that which brings more dishonour upon the Lord than all the ribald jests of scoffing atheists — is the lukewarmness of its members. Well may he say to his lukewarm church, as he does in our text, “I will spue thee out of my mouth.”

Yet once more, notice that, *wherever there is lukewarmness in religious matters, it is out of place*. There is no spot, near to the throne of God, where lukewarmness could stand in a seemingly position. Take the pulpit, for instance. Ah, my brethren, of all spots in the world, if lukewarmness cometh here, then is the preacher indeed undone! He should be, of all men, the most in earnest who undertakes the charge of souls, for he has that solemn charge ringing in his ears: “I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not

speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand." They who have to deal with hardhearted sinners, — they who have to preach unpalatable truths, — surely *they* should not make men's hearts harder, and the truth more unpalatable, by uttering it in a half-hearted manner. It will go hard with the man who has exercised his ministry with in difference. "If," said one of old, "there be a man who finds the ministry an easy place, he will find *it* a hard matter, at the last, to give in his account before God." If, my brethren, there should be any professed ministers of Christ, who never know what it is to travail in birth for souls; if there be men who take up the ministry merely as a profession, and exercise it as they might do in any secular calling; if they preach merely as a matter of routine, or because they consider it is a pleasant occupation; it would have been better for them if they had never been born. Far better would it have been for them to have broken stones by the wayside than to have been preaching the gospel, and leaving their hearts out of their sermons; yea, I know not whether it would not have been better to have been a devil in hell than to have been a minister in the pulpit without his heart in his work. Baxter's "Reformed Pastor" stirs my very soul whenever I read its glowing periods, — those fiery thunderbolts which he hurls at the heads of idle shepherds and lazy ministers. I have read nearly the whole book through to those who are studying for the ministry in connection with this church, and often have I seen the tears start from their eyes while listening to the burning language of that fervent preacher and writer. Every time I have read a chapter in that book, I have felt that, the next Sabbath, I could preach — I must preach — with greater earnestness after reading the solemn words of that mightiest of ministers, Richard Baxter. Ah, beloved, we need to have more of that earnestness in the pulpit! What though my

young brethren should study less, and be more earnest? Rather let them study as much as ever they can; but, oh! if the Holy Spirit will but shed his sacred fire upon the dry fuel of their studies, how much more will be accomplished for the kingdom, of Christ than is done now! So, you see, dear friends, that lukewarmness is out of place in the pulpit.

So it is, my brethren, and sisters, in the Sunday-school, with the tract-distributor, and even with the private Christian, the humble attendant upon the means of grace. Everywhere, lukewarmness in religion is to be loathed and abandoned, for it is a gross and glaring inconsistency. I would not have you go, with a lukewarm heart, even to distribute tracts. I would not have you dare to visit the sick unless your heart is filled with love to Christ. Either do such work well, or do not do it at all. Either put your heart into the work, or let someone else do it. We have had too many men of straw filling up our ranks; we have had too many automatons going forth to fight our battles. We have counted our legions, and said, "A brave host they will be;" but if our army is sifted, if our ranks are thinned, we shall probably find that fewer true soldiers of the cross will accomplish more if they are not impeded in their onward march by the mixed multitude of those who pretend to join the army of the living God.

I hope that lukewarm professors will find themselves thoroughly out of place amongst us; I do not think they could long be happy here. There are so many brethren here with a red-hot spirit that they would soon get burned, and they would say, "This is not the spot for us." If you, lukewarm professors, come amongst us, you will be asked to do fifty things, and you will be teased till you do them, for the good people here will not be content unless you do all that you can, and they will probably want you to do two or three times more than you can. I am sure that, in all places where God has sent warm-hearted men to

preach the gospel, you will find yourselves extremely uncomfortable if you want to be lukewarm. I certainly could toll you of some chapels where you could take your seat, and where you would be greatly needed for the support of the ministry. The minister would never wake you; I daresay, if you paid an extra half-crown a quarter, he would let you sleep on as long as you liked. If you did not join the church, nobody would ever think of asking you whether you were a member or not. In our fashionable churches, of course, people do not speak to one another; that would be quite beneath their assumed dignity. No man would dare, in such a place as that, to turn to his neighbour, and say, "Are you a child of God?" Well, if you mean to be lukewarm, go to one of those places; but do not stay here, lest we should worry you by our importunities. I question whether anybody would come here, for a few Sundays, without some brother walking up to him, and asking him whether he was a follower of Christ, or not; and the question would be repeated, by one or another, until he came to some decision concerning his soul.

II. Now I will turn to the second part of my subject, in which I am to give you **SOME DISSUASIVES AGAINST LUKEWARMNESS**. I have exposed its evils, now let me try to dissuade you from it.

Let me remind you that, *as Christians, you have to do with solemn realities*. You have to do with death, with eternity, with heaven, with hell, with Christ, with Satan, with souls that must live for ever; can you deal with these things in a cold spirit? If you can deal thus with them successfully, it will be one of the greatest marvels in the world, for these things demand the whole man. If but to praise God requires that we call up all the powers of our soul, how much more is needed to serve God, and to serve him, not in the hewing of wood and the drawing of water, but in the winning of souls, in preaching his gospel, in

propagating his cause, and extending his kingdom. Here, my brethren, are stern and solemn things for us to deal with, and they must not be touched by any but those who come warm-heartedly to deal with them. Remember, too, that *these were very solemn things with you once*. Perhaps you have been converted ten or twenty years; yet can it be that these truths now fall lightly upon your ear, and excite but little emotion? There was a time when it needed little to make you earnest; you were, then, —

“Laden with guilt, and full of fears.”

Your groans were deep; you could not sleep at night; you were labouring under such a heavy burden that it seemed to crush your soul all but into the lowest hell. Then, you prayed in earnest, and you sought God in earnest. Oh, how you used, in those days, to long to be able even to stand in the aisle, if you could but hear the Word! Though the distance you had to come was great, and the pressure of the crowd to enter the house of prayer was inconvenient, and though you were almost ready to faint, sometimes, before the sermon was finished, you bore up through an insatiable desire to listen to the gospel message which might be the means of your salvation. Do you not remember how, at that time, you thought every unsaved person was a fool, and especially thought that you yourself were a fool for having so long left these great realities untouched, and almost unthought of, while the trifles of a day were engrossing all your thoughts? Oh, then, I conjure you, by those days long gone by, think as earnestly now of those things as you did then! Let your past experience be the standard of your present zeal. You ought to have advanced beyond that; but if you have not, be patient enough to go back, and begin again where you began before; be humble enough to ask God to revive the sincerity of your penitence, the reality of your grace, the eagerness of your desires, and the flaming passion of your heart.

And remember, further, that *there have been times, with you, when these things did seem worthy of a warm heart.* Perhaps you recollect when a child out of your Sunday-school class died, and then you thought, "Oh, that I had taught that child more earnestly, and prayed over it with all my heart!" Possibly, when your own child died, you cried, "O Absalom, my son, my son!" and the thought wounded you to the quick, that you had not taught that child as you might have done, and that you had not wrestled with God in prayer for that child's soul as you ought to have done. Have not I also had to think like this when I have buried some of your kinsfolk or acquaintances? As I have looked down into the grave of some unconverted hearer, the tears have streamed from my eyes; and, afterwards, I have awoke at night with some solemn and terrible dream embodying this black thought, — "Have I been faithful to that soul? Have I dealt with that spirit, now departed, as I would deal with it if I had another opportunity of preaching to it?" Sometimes, I feel that I can even say, with the apostle Paul, "I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." But there are other seasons of awful questioning when I tremble lest, out of so numerous a flock, the loss of even one should be attributed to the shepherd's neglect. Do not some of you remember, when the cholera was so rife, how solemn you thought the things of God to be? And when the fever came into your house, and one after another died, you thought there was nothing worth living for but to be prepared to die; and that your whole business, from that time, should be to seek to warn others, lest they should perish, and go to the dread place of torment.

Let me remind you, also, that *the day is coming when you will think these things worthy of your whole heart.* When you and I shall be stretched upon our dying beds, I think we shall

have to regret, above everything else, our coldness of heart. Among the many sins which we must then confess, and which, I trust, we shall then know were pardoned, and “laid upon the Scapegoat’s head of old,” perhaps this will lie the heaviest upon our heart and conscience, “I did not live as I ought to have done; I was not as earnest in my Lord’s cause as I should have been.” Then will our cold sermons, like sheeted ghosts, march before our eyes in dread array. Then will our neglected days start up, each one seeming to wave its hair as though it were one of the seven furies, and to look right into our hearts, and make our very blood curdle in our veins. Then will our Sunday-school classes appear again before us; and those who taught us to teach others will come, and reprove us for having despised their training, and not having profited by that holy instruction which we received when we were set apart for God’s cause, and were first trained to serve in his great army. We may reckon these things of small importance now; but when we lie on the borders of eternity, we shall think them worth living for, and worth dying a thousand deaths for. I believe that, then, some of those truths which we have kept back, and those ordinances which we have neglected, and those precepts which we have despised, will seem to grow into an awful mass, too heavy for your soul to endure; just as, sometimes, in a dream, a mountain appears to rise from a single grain of sand, and to swell, and swell, and swell, till its stupendous weight seems to oppress your brain, and to crush the very life out of you. If you have lived lukewarmly, the things of God will then, even though you be a child of his, darken your dying hour, and weigh down your spirit with a fearful load of sad reflections.

Ay, and there will come a time when the things of God will seem yet more real than even on our dying bed; that will be *when- we stand at the bar of God*. Am I prepared to stand there with a ministry half discharged? What shall I do if I have to

give account before God for sermons preached without my heart being put into them? How shall I appear before my Maker if I have ever kept back anything which I thought might have been useful to you, if I have shunned to rebuke any of you when I ought to have done so, if I have not warned you faithfully, and loved you tenderly, even as my own soul, and sought to woo you to the Saviour? How can I give in my account, as a steward of the Lord, if I have only served him half-heartedly? O God, grant, I beseech thee, that, notwithstanding a thousand infirmities, thy servant may ever be free from that great sin of being lukewarm in thy cause!

And what think you, sirs, will you do, as professed followers of Christ, if you have been lukewarm professors, if you have had a name to live, and yet have been dead, or if you have been only half alive, with all your energies paralyzed? Ah, sirs! Ah. sirs! I would not, for all the world, live as some of you are living; — just observing some of the externals of godliness without the vital power thereof, giving Christ a little of your substance just for a mere show, offering him a little of your time just to pacify your conscience, taking his name upon you to hide your own defects; but still a stranger to his grace, — unconsecrated, undevoted, — not yielding yourself wholly to him, but still living to the flesh while pretending to be quickened by the Spirit; with your heart in your business, but no heart in your religion; closely pursuing the world, but following Christ afar off; firmly grasping the world's plough, but only now and then lightly touching Christ's plough, and looking back even as you do so. O sirs! I tell you, when the earth begins to reel, when the heavens begin to shake, when the stars fall from their places, and begin to dash abroad like men bewildered, you will be bewildered, too; your heart, too, shall shake, and your grand hopes totter to destruction, if you have only served Jesus with a lukewarm heart. God give us grace to make our religion *all*, that we may

put our whole heart into it, and live it out, and then be prepared to die for it, if need be, and God so please, that we may live to enjoy the results of it in glory everlasting!

I am fearful, full often, in addressing the same congregation, Sabbath after Sabbath, and week after week, now by the space of seven years, lest my voice should grow stale to you; and I can truthfully say that, I would rather cease to preach at all than preach to people to whom my voice had become so familiar that it was only like the ringing of an old bell to which they gave no heed. No, there must be feeling in the congregation as well as earnestness in the preacher; otherwise, let me resign my commission. I pray God, if I am spared to minister to you, year after year, and you are spared to sit in the pew to hear the Word, that there may be earnestness in you, and earnestness in me, that we may never come down to the dead level of some of the churches of which I spoke a little while ago; — as you may think, in a spirit of censure; but as God knows, in a spirit of loving faithfulness; — old churches that have come to be like pools without outlets, covered over with the sickly duckweed of respectability. Stagnation in a church is the devil's delight. I do not think he cares how many Baptist chapels you build, nor how many churches you open, if you have only lukewarm preachers and people in them. He cares not for your armies if your soldiers will but sleep; nor for your guns if they are not loaded. "Let them build as much as they like," says he, "for those buildings are not the batteries that shake the gates of hell." What we want is new zeal, fresh energy, more fire; our old Baptist cause has become very slack. The great mass of Baptists appear to be ashamed of their opinions, and many of our ministers say so little about baptism that people forget that there is such an ordinance of Christ. If we have held our tongues concerning baptism, we have that sin lying at our door, for which we shall have to give account; and I trust that we

shall not continue in it any longer. If believers' baptism is an ordinance of Christ, — and we know that it is, — we ought to speak out plainly about it. I recommend our brethren and sisters to distribute tracts upon the subject, as widely as ever they can; and, especially, to make known the teaching of the New Testament upon this matter. If Paedo-Baptist ministers will only preach upon it, I need not do so, for that will send some of their people to search the Scriptures, and that is all that we want. If our views are not in accordance with God's Word, let us abandon them; but if they are in harmony with our Lord's teaching, let us not hold our tongues concerning them. We have had too much of this guilty silence, let us boldly proclaim the whole truths and, by terrible things in righteousness, answer thou, O God! Bring on the clash of arms once again, and let thy Church win the victory! Give the victory to the right and the true, and let all error be trampled under foot! So be it, o Lord, and unto thy name be all the glory!

Amen.

TWENTY-ONE
A GREAT MISTAKE AND THE WAY TO
RECTIFY IT

SERMON GIVEN ON SEPTEMBER 3, 1882

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 3:17-18

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 28

*“Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased
with goods, and have need of nothing; and
knowest not that thou art wretched, and
miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I
counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the
fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white
raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and
that the shame of thy nakedness do not
appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve,
that thou mayest see.”*

REVELATION 3:17-18.

THESE words were spoken, not to the outside world, but to the church of Laodicea. They relate to persons who were in a church state, who had been baptized on confession of their faith in Christ, and who were thought to be in a fine spiritual condition. They had a singularly high opinion of themselves, and probably considered that of all the seven churches in Asia they were the first in power and influence. The words before us are as sharp as they are true, and they demand the earnest attention of all professors of our holy faith, for to persons like ourselves they were addressed, and moreover we have the special note of attention — “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” Here the axe is laid to the root, not of the oaks of the forest or the pines of the mountain side, but to the root of the trees of the vineyard, and the choice trees of the garden of the Lord. By this the Lord showed his love to the true ones in Laodicea, according as he saith, “As many as I love I rebuke and chasten.” While reading the text I feel forced to cry, “O my threshing, and the corn of my floor!” Truly the flail must first be used upon the heap that is gathered in the garner. It is all in vain to preach to the outside world unless matters be true and right within. The Kingdom cannot come nor the Lord’s banner be lifted high if the soldiers of his own army prove false and turn back in the day of battle. The time is come when judgment must begin at the house of God. The word to the slaughtermen in Ezekiel was, “Begin at my sanctuary.” The stout heart of the king of Assyria will not be punished till the Lord has performed his whole work upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem. Behold, the Lord himself cometh to deal with his church; for his fire is Zion, and his furnace is in Jerusalem. “His fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor.” As for them that are without, God will judge them in his own time: but now by his blessed Spirit he speaks

to those of us who are within the church, and make profession of his name.

The solemn words which make up our text were also spoken by the Lord Jesus under a most special title: "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness" (verse 14); as much as to say that, though the Laodicean professors were false, mistaken, and deluded, he who now addressed them by his servant John was true and faithful. He is the Amen, the Verily, Verily of God; he judges not according to the outward appearance, but looketh at the heart according to truth. He is "the faithful and true witness," who does not flatter, nor keep back any of the terrible truth; but speaks out that which he perceives with his eyes of fire, and warns men of their condition with all sincerity. Instead of crying peace, peace, where there is no peace, and letting them be like Moab at ease from their youth, and settled upon their lees because not emptied from vessel to vessel, he stirs them up that the sediment of their falsehood may be seen and their evil case be made manifest. Oh for grace to hear this word at this time as from the Lord Jesus, and as from him under the weighty character of a witness faithful and true, speaking as the Amen of God.

It seems to me that my text accounts for the lukewarmness of the Laodiceans. They were lukewarm because they imagined themselves rich when they were poor. Two conditions will help us to escape lukewarmness. The one is to be really rich in grace; for they that have much grace will not be lukewarm. Grace is as a fire in the soul, and he that hath much of it, so as to become an advanced Christian, cannot but have a heart boiling with earnestness. The other way is to have but little grace, but to be painfully aware of it, to be deeply conscious of soul-poverty, to sigh and cry because you are not what you should be. There is no lukewarmness in a strong desire caused by a bitter sense of need. The poor man, poor in spirit,

conscious of his imperfections and failures, is never a lukewarm man, but with sighs and cries coming out of a heart that is all on fire with a desire to escape out of such a sad condition, he besieges the throne of God that he may obtain more grace. These Laodicean people were unhappily in such a state that you could not get at them. They were not so poor that they knew they were poor, and therefore when the poverty-stricken were addressed, they said, "These things are not for us: we are increased in goods." They were blind, but they thought they saw; they were naked, and yet they prided themselves in their princely apparel, and hence it was hard to reach them. Had they even been outwardly worse, had they openly sinned, had they defiled their garments with overt transgression, then the Spirit might have pointed out the blot and convicted them there and then; but what was to be done when the mischief was hidden and internal? Had they been utterly cold and frost-bitten, then he might have thawed them into living warmth; but such was their puffed-up notion of themselves that one could not convince them of sin, or awaken them to any sense of fear, and it seemed likely that alter all the Lord must needs spue them out of his mouth as things he could not endure. How far this may be true of any one of us may God of his infinite mercy help us to judge each one for himself. Whether it be true or not, it will not matter as to the usefulness of the discourse if God the Holy Spirit will bless it to our souls in his own way.

Two things in the text call for our notice. The first is their saying: "Thou sayest, I am rich"; and the second is Christ's counsel: "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see."

I. First, let us think of the church in Laodicea and listen to

THEIR SAYING; it may prevent us from reaching such a height of pride as to speak as they did.

The spirit of self-congratulation expressed itself in a manner strikingly unanimous. If all the members did not say so in words, yet, as a whole, they were so self-contented, that the great Amen spoke of them as one person, "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." Doubtless a few wept and sighed before God, but they were so inconsiderable that they did not mar the apparent unanimity of the church in its conscious self-respect, nor divide the united utterance of its open boasting. "Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods." It would seem that their minister was of the same opinion. Good easy man, he felt that his church was in a splendid state, for the Spirit of God here speaks to the "angel of the church," who is, no doubt, the minister of the church, and he says to him, "Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods." The self-complacent man had probably gathered together a wealthy congregation, wealthy as compared with the general run of the people of God, who were usually the poorest of the poor. Among these were persons of considerable talent, and as a body they were intellectual and educated. They were so rich in all sorts of endowments that they had "need of nothing." Perhaps they hardly needed a minister at all, but were able to become every man his own teacher, and so the timid man was quiet and smooth-tongued for fear they should dispense with him. They might perhaps prefer an open meeting, and then what would become of him? The proverb saith, "Like priest, like people," and under the preacher's lukewarm addresses the church became lukewarm too. They were so rich in gifts that they did not need to economize, and send out their brethren to preach one by one. They could afford to let a dozen attempt to do what one could have done a great deal better. They had grown to be such a leading church that other

churches looked up to them. They were noted and celebrated all over the country. A member of the Church of Laodicea was recognised at once as a remarkable person, so that wherever he went the people would ask him to get up and speak; for coming down from Laodicea, that famous church which had “need of nothing,” surely he could not open his mouth without precious things dropping therefrom; for was he not one of those who were “rich, and increased with goods, and had need of nothing”? It was a first-class church, and their prudent and kind minister thought so too, and he took occasion often to say as much. When he spoke to the good people of Philadelphia, at their anniversary meeting, he told them that he hoped they would do their best although they had but a little strength, and could not expect to equal his people who were so much richer and so much better educated. Of course, all churches could not be so strong as Laodicea; it was not likely that everywhere, in those little places, they could gather congregations such as he was proud to look on every Sabbath-day in the Tabernacle at Laodicea. It was the general, unanimous feeling, from the minister down to the latest convert, that they were a most wonderful church. They were heartily at one in having a high estimate of themselves, and this helped to keep them together, and stirred them to attempt great things.

This saying of theirs was exceedingly boastful, for it divides itself into three parts. They were “rich,” that was their present state; and “increased with goods,” — that is they could look back upon years of great prosperity and progress in their past history; and at that present time, if they were not absolutely perfect, they were getting close to the edge of it, for they had “need of nothing”; they did not know of anything which the church lacked; they had the best deacons, the best elders, the best members, always ready to do anything and everything that was proposed to them. They were rich, and increased with

goods, and had need of nothing. The present was all right, the past was eminently satisfactory, and they had reached a point of all but absolute perfection, for they needed nothing, and when people have need of nothing they can go no further; they have ascended to the highest point; their sun has reached its zenith; their path has been like the path of the just which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

Truly I do not know that they could have opened their mouths any wider. They gave forth about as fine a piece of brag as one is likely to meet with in any ancient record. Here is a church which is a city set on a hill that cannot be hid; is it not a candle that giveth light unto all that are in the house? and the candle wants no snuffing, it is burning at its very best. Think of a church which has need of nothing!

Now, notice once more that they were sincere in this glorying. When they said it they were not consciously boasting, for the text says, "And thou knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." They did not know the truth. They were not hypocrites; when they thus spoke with such self-conscious complacency they really thought it was so, and their minister thought so too. The angel of the church thought that it was an angelic church. There was no insincerity in what they said: in fact, I dare say they said to themselves, "We really speak below what we might say. We are a wonderful people! What we do could hardly be put in print or thoroughly described in words. Our existence is an extraordinary fact." They did not know the real truth of the matter, but they sincerely believed the flattering tale which their ignorance told them. How readily do we believe a lie when it fosters in us a high opinion of ourselves.

But now see what was their actual state: they were altogether mistaken. Their mistake was founded upon ignorance: — "Thou knowest not." These intelligent persons, these

wealthy persons, these instructed persons did not know themselves, and that is the grossest kind of ignorance. A man may know all about Africa, and the sources of the Nile and the Congo, and yet he may not know what is going on in certain regions of the home department. He is ignorant indeed who does not know his own condition in reference to the most weighty matters. In our church there are many members who know shamefully little about it; they go in and out among us, and they have not enough concern about the church to make its spiritual state a matter of enquiry. I grieve to say that there are members who, I fear, do not know their own spiritual state, who take it for granted that everything is sound, and say, "No doubt it is all correct." If their conscience is touched, and they are troubled, they call it unbelief; though it is quite another thing, and may be praised as godly fear. If they are driven into a corner by conviction, they say, "I must not get into this state; I must hope for the best." They make the best of everything, and shut their eyes to all storm-signals. These Laodicean people were mistaken through ignorance; they had not searched, they had judged the surface of the matter, and never looked below the top-soil; but "the faithful and true witness" makes them see the naked truth. He says, "Thou knowest not that thou art wretched": that is to say, they were in a sad and undesirable state; there was nothing about them that could please God, and nothing about them that would have pleased themselves if they had seen things in a true light. "Thou art wretched." Oh, what a change from the distorting glass of self-flattery to the clear mirror of truth! How these men that had need of nothing are shown up when Christ begins to describe them! They seem to need everything. The next word, "miserable" conveys the same idea to us in the English, but the original had better, perhaps, have been translated "pitiable." There was nothing about them to admire, but everything to pity; for everything that seemed to

be good was really false; everything that was apparently useful was a mere matter of display. As Jesus Christ looked at Laodicea he said of the church, "Pitiable! Pitiable!" He does not use fine expressions, does he, towards this respectable church, this church with so much wealth and so much strength? He does not flatter it, for he says of it, first, "Wretched!" and then "Pitiable!" Then he goes on to say, "Poor!"— poor in the choice things in which they thought they were rich; so much grace they thought they had, but he says they have exceedingly little, and calls them "poor." Oh, but they had such riches of faith! "No," says he, "poor!" Oh, but they had such abundance of energy. "No," he says, "that is only a pretence. They are poor." He searches the members through, and looks into their hearts, where their precious things are stored up, and he says of them all, "Poor." There is a sense in which the Lord cries, "Blessed are ye poor," but these were poor in quite another sense. Think of it! Here are a people that were "rich and increased with goods, and had need of nothing," and yet the verdict of the Saviour is, "They are poor!" And then he goes on to say they are "blind" Blind? Why, they had among them men of the greatest possible discernment, who could see as far into a millstone as any people: they were able to split hairs over points of doctrine, and they had discernment of spirits, so they thought, and could tell who was and who was not sincere; but Jesus Christ says, — they have no discernment, they are "blind." They are not merely shortsighted and weak about the eyes, but altogether blind. And mark you, this is no exaggeration: it is not a hard speech meant to sting them into repentance, but the "Amen, the faithful and true witness" says this calmly and deliberately, and says it about that admirable church of Laodicea concerning which we heard so much when we commenced our discourse; they were poor and blind. And now he adds that they were "naked" No, surely, not that! Will the

Saviour say as much as that? Yes, he says so. They are not dressed in the righteousness of Christ: they are dressed in their own cobwebs of conceit; and therefore they are naked. They are not resting upon Christ, but relying upon their own strength and wealth, and therefore he says they are “naked.” Yes, these same people who “have need of nothing,” yet have need of a rag with which to cover the shame of their nakedness. They are “naked” before God. Had a storm come upon them suddenly they would have found it out. We are such poor creatures that we need to be covered from the sun and from the wind, from the wet and from the drought, from the cold and from the heat. Such is our weakness that we have need of garments against all outward surroundings; and so it was with these Laodiceans; not only for the common decency of their appearance did they need to be robed in the righteousness of Christ, but they needed the most ordinary kind of covering. Though they did not know it, they were open to have been scattered and destroyed as a church had anything happened out of the common way. Oh, this mistake! May the Lord of truth prevent us from making it about ourselves individually, and prevent every church from making such a mistake about itself, and being unanimous in it.

These professors were poor and proud: they were conceited, and therefore they were not likely to be converted. They thought they were making progress, but they were going backward; and because they did not know their true condition it was hard work to help them. You remember the Tay Bridge disaster. There is no doubt whatever that the bridge was not fitted for its position, its ordinary strain was all it could bear; but nobody thought so. Undoubtedly the engineers reckoned it would stand any test to which it might be put, and therefore there was no attention given to it to make it any stronger and to provide against sudden disaster; and consequently when a

especially fierce hurricane was out one night it swept it all away. That is just the picture of many a church and many a man, because he is thought to be so pious, and the church is thought to be so correct and vigorous, therefore no attempt is made for improvement, no special prayer, no cries to heaven, no repentance because of backsliding, and so when there comes an unusual pressure, a night of terrible temptation, the whole fabric falls in ruin. How much better is the condition of the man who feels that he is weak, and therefore goes to the strong for strength! I know a railway-bridge at this moment which is showing signs of danger; there are cracks in the brickwork and other mischiefs: in all probability it would soon have come down if let alone: but it has been noticed by the railway people, and they are as busy as possible trying to repair it and prevent accident. Is not this much better than a delusive belief that all is safe? If there is a crack in the substantial part of your religious structure, what a mercy to see it! If the supporting pillars begin to give way, what a blessing to perceive the fact! "Oh," says one, "you make us feel uneasy." Yes, it is often a great blessing to be uneasy, and that blessing I pray the Holy Spirit to confer upon you. It is infinitely better to be uneasy and to get right than to be perfectly serene and all the while to be wrong. How many a house is built upon sand, and only waits till the floods shall come and the winds shall beat upon it, and then the whole fair fabric will vanish like a vision of the night: will it not be well to let the tenant know his peril? I think so.

Now I leave this saying: may we never use it ourselves. We have looked underneath the surface, and we have seen the mud which lies at the bottom of what seemed a glassy pool.

II. Now we come to think of OUR LORD'S BLESSED COUNSEL. "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear;

and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see." I call your attention first to the amazing grace which is here displayed. Ask a schoolmaster what kind of pupil is most objectionable, and I think he will reply that he cannot bear a youth who knows so much already that he will learn nothing correctly. It is very hard to deal with the conceited. We can instruct persons who are conscious of ignorance and willing to learn, but those who "have need of nothing," what can you teach them? They are up to the mark in all points: they are models: they can teach you, and therefore what can you say to them? But here our blessed Lord seems to single out this puffed-up church, though pride is always obnoxious to him, and he draws near to it and begins to speak to it in love. He does not use a peremptory tone, but in words of great affection he tenders his advice. He does not say, "I command thee," but "I counsel thee." It is tantamount to that other blessed text, "Come now, and let us reason together." He puts it so softly, as if he said, "I offer a little kindly advice to you: will you listen to me? I might speak in harsher tones: I might condemn, I might command; but instead of that I stoop to you, and counsel you. See whether my counsel be not good. Am I not the Wonderful, the Counsellor? Is not the wisdom of God in me? Therefore I am come to speak to you," saith Christ, "and counsel you."

Note how he begins — "I counsel thee to buy." Is not that singular advice indeed? Just now he said that they were "wretched" and "poor." How can they buy? Surely it suggests to us at once those blessed free grace terms which are only to be met with in the market of divine love: "Yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." The chapmen of Vanity Fair have great difficulty to bring people up to their price, but the Lord Jesus Christ's difficulty is to bring people down to his, and so he begins by counselling the poor to come and buy on such terms as this: "Without money and without

price." But why is it called buying? If you have nothing to give, why does he not say, "Come and take it"? Nay, it is buying, because God would have us make business of it. If any of you have backslidden, and yet dream that you have not declined; if there creeps over you now the cold thought that perhaps it is so; then rouse yourselves and make a business of recovery. Come to Christ and buy; not merely act the beggar's part, but come and act the purchaser's part, with thoughtfulness, with desire, with judgment. Come now, and give an estimate; do as you would if you were buying a valued article. Estimate the value of Christ and see how richly he is worth having. In a purchase, there is consent on both sides: the one consents to sell, and the other to receive by purchase; hence the word "buy" is used, for God does not force the gifts of his grace upon any man, but he first teaches him his need of those gifts, and then he bids him come and buy, though it be without price, by exercising thought, making an estimate, having a strong desire, being willing to give anything if he had anything to give, and then taking the blessing with joyful willingness. Christ gives them counsel to buy.

But next, what does he say? "I counsel thee to buy of me." Ah, they had been dealing with one another: they had been chaffering and bartering amongst themselves. One brother had brought this talent, another another, and they had grown rich, as they thought, by a mutual commerce. "Now," says Christ, "compare yourselves with yourselves no longer: give up seeking of man, and buy of me." It is the very foundation of grace, — to be willing to buy of Christ. Have you a religion which you received of me? It is not worth a pin. Have you in possession a religion which you received of your mother, and father, and Sunday-school teacher, and neighbours, and friends? It is worth nothing. All true grace must be bought of Christ on free grace terms: "I counsel thee to buy of me" Do you not know that

Jesus is a great monopolist? Nobody else has anything to sell of this kind. The articles he speaks of are entire monopolies in his hands: no one else can sell you the gold tried by fire, or white raiment that you may be clothed, or eyesalve that you may see; but the whole stock of grace is vested in the person and offices of Jesus Christ, and therefore he says, "I counsel thee to buy of me" Do you wear a spiritual vesture which you bought elsewhere? Do you use an eyesalve which you purchased of another physician? Do you hoard up gold which you procured of some pretended goldsmith? Throw the imaginary boons away; for there is no genuine article in the market except that which comes of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of him alone. "I counsel thee to buy of me" Oh, that every Christian here would lay hold upon this advice, and say, "I will go and buy of Christ again." Have I been living on past experience? Have I been living on a profession which I have maintained these last twenty years? I will do so no longer: I will buy of Jesus anew: I will get my manna fresh from heaven: I will seek all my provision day by day from the person of my blessed Lord and Master, for he counsels me to buy of him.

Now see the goods which he describes. "I counsel thee to buy of me" — what? Everything. It is true that only three wants of these people are here mentioned, but they are inclusive of all needs. First, the Lord says, "Buy gold." The man who can buy gold has bought everything, for money answereth all things. He who has gold has the medium with which he can procure whatsoever he needeth. In Christ there is a fulness of all good things, and in the gold of his grace there is an adaptation to every need. You cannot have a necessity, nor even think of a necessity which is a real one, but the grace of God, which is like fine gold, will be sure to meet it. Your free will, your unaided efforts, your wisdom, your knowledge, your strength, — all this you can get something for in such and such a market; but in God's market

there is nothing current but this precious gold, and if you get the gold of grace, then you can get whatsoever your soul needs. "I counsel you," says he "to buy of me gold."

Then next he brings forth raiment rich and rare; perfect coverings, such as do really clothe a man so that the shame of his nakedness will never appear. I like that expression. It is very plain, but what suggestions there are in it! for our sin is our shame, and it is well that the Lord has found a complete covering for it. Sin brought nakedness upon us, and shame is the result; but he who hath Christ hath lost both sin and shame, for the blood of Jesus removes guilt from the soul and terror from the conscience. Man was naked, and is still naked apart from Christ, but in Christ he is covered, and has become comely before the Lord. Even those eyes of God which see everything cannot see that which does not exist, and God hath said of his people's iniquities, "They shall not be." God has cast the sins of his people behind his back, therefore he cannot see them. "If they are searched for, they shall not be found; yea, they shall not be, saith the Lord"; and if they shall not "be" or exist, then are they gone from his sight. What a covering this must be. What a purchase this is for a man to buy white raiment of Christ! Imputed and inherent righteousness make up the double garment of righteousness, wrought out for us by the Lord Jesus, and in us by the Holy Ghost. This is a fair garment in which to stand among men, and it will fit us to appear at the judgment-seat of God. Jesus says, "I counsel thee, buy this of me"; no one else has this sacred apparel to dispose of. The fig-leaves of earth are a mockery, and the cobwebs of conceit are soon blown aside, but the covering which adorns and comforts is with Christ alone, whose name is "The Lord our righteousness."

Next our Lord recommends them to buy an eyesalve of him. That is a very curious recommendation, is it not? For they

were blind; and can an eyesalve give blind men eyes? Many salves are useful for eyes when they are weak or inflamed, but what salve is of any good to a blind man? He says they are blind, and yet recommends them to buy eyesalve of him. Strange counsel! But there is no setting forth gospel principles by human similes without endowing the emblems with something above nature. We must strain that which is human to set forth by it that which is divine. O ye that have no heavenly discernment, that have no eyeballs upon which the light might fall, Christ Jesus counsels you to come and buy of him the true collyrium, that ancient salve of high renown, or something more marvellous still, which will open your eyes so that you shall see that which is invisible, and shall behold the face of God. This is glorious. No other physician hath such eyesalve. None else can pretend thereto. The Saviour has the whole stock of this sovereign remedy; he is the sole dispenser of it, no one can make the like; go, then, to him who sells, and buy for yourselves.

The counsel of the Lord is not only that we buy of him everything, but that we buy the best of everything of him. Laodicea had made the mistake of buying second-quality articles, which turned out to be good for nothing. Our Lord says, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold." Gold is the most precious metal, but he would have them buy the best of it, "gold tried in the fire," gold that has just passed through the assay and has the mint mark upon it; gold that will endure all further tests, having survived that of fire. O brothers and sisters, our wisdom is to buy what we do buy from Christ, for from him cometh grace which will endure to the end. I have lately been looking through some of the sufferings of the Waldenses for Christ, and the sad spectacle has produced a most painful effect upon my mind, but I trust also a beneficial one. When I read of the horrible cruelties wrought upon them by the Papists, and of the

firmness of feeble women and children, as well as men, I asked myself, Could I endure such torments? I did not dare believe that I could, for they suffered agonies which scarce even the devils of hell could have invented. Suppose that you and I should possess a sort of grace which would not endure such tests, will it be the right sort of grace? If we are never dragged at the heels of horses, or set up as targets, or dismembered, or burned at a slow fire, yet we ought to have that same kind of grace which made these gracious ones more than conquerors through Jesus Christ. It is true we may never have to suffer martyrdom, but a man must be prepared to give up house, and lands, and wife, and children, yea, and his own life also, sooner than forsake Christ. Look at the saints in the first days, the young, brave church of Christ, when the world sought to stamp out our holy faith. They defied the world, and Pliny writes to Trajan to know what to do, for the Christians come crowding to the judgment seat to avow their faith. Instead of shunning the conflict they seemed to court it; knowing that to avow themselves Christians was speedy death, they were yet eager to do it: knowing that torments unutterable awaited them, they offered themselves willingly to bear anything for their dear Saviour. Could we act in this fashion, think you? Yes, if we have bought the true “gold tried in the fire,” but not else. Is our gold of this sort? Do not begin talking about how you could endure martyrdom: how do you endure the ordinary trials of life? In those lesser pains that come upon your body— are you patient? Those little disquietudes in the domestic circle— do you keep your temper over them? Those words that sometimes drop carelessly, not meant to be unkind, but which grate on your feelings, — can you forgive them for Christ’s sake, and think no more of them? If not, what kind of gold is this which cannot bear the touch of the acid? Such metal would hardly do to lie on the hob, much less to be put in the flame: if it begins to melt

in such mild heat it would utterly vanish in the furnace. Oh to have gold which has been tested in the centre of the flame, such as God himself will own in the last great day, when he shall come to separate between the precious and the vile. Christ counsels us to buy the best, and we can only get it by buying it of him, “without money and without price.”

Remember the raiment too, for that is of the best; our Lord calls it “white raiment.” That is a pure colour, a holy colour, a royal colour. We put on the Lord Jesus as our joy, our glory, our righteousness. To walk with him in white is real honour, and sure acceptance: it marks us out as victors through him that has loved us. This robe is the true wedding dress, a holiday robe, and yet a serviceable garment arraying a man from head to foot. Are you wearing it? Is your sin hidden? Does it not at times appear? Does it not come before your own conscience? “Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God, but if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.” Have you this covering so that you will not be afraid to die in it, nor afraid to stand before the blazing judgment seat in it? Are you sure, certain, positive that your sin is put away in Christ Jesus? This is what you need, and you must not be content with less. If you must play at haphazard do it with your estates, do it with your lives, but never leave your soul affairs to be a matter of chance. Make sure work for eternity. A man likes to be quite positive about the title deeds if he buys a farm; but what is that? If I wish for heaven, I want to be sure that I have it; sure that I have Christ who is the glory of it; sure that I am pardoned and renewed, which is my fitness for it. One single note of question upon that matter will banish all peace and joy out of your heart. God grant us grace to buy the white raiment through which nothing of sin can be seen, for all guilt is gone.

And as to the eyesalve, it is the best possible one, for Jesus

says, "Anoint thine eyes with eyesalve that thou mayest see." Eyesalve that can make a blind man see stands in the front rank of all the medicaments that ever can be sold. Oh, for grace to get it, so that we may see and know spiritual things. Can you say, "One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see"? Are you the pure in heart who see God? Is God about you wherever you are? Can you see your own sin and hate it? Can you see the power of Christ's blood and delight to be washed in it? Can you see the spiritual kingdom, or do you only see the things of your trade and business, the things which blind worldlings can perceive? O God, give us real sight that we may see heaven and delight in it, see hell and flee the sin that will bring us there, that we may see Christ and rejoice in him evermore. He counsels us to do this.

So I must come to a close by noticing that all this is the counsel of Christ, and the counsel of Christ to a people that were proud and self-conceited. He gave those counsel who thought they needed none. Does not this reveal infinite grace, that he should come to such and sit down by them and say, "Come now, put your case into my hand; it is a very bad one, and I advise you to come to me for help"? Oh, how tenderly would I try to speak this morning in imitation of the soft tones of Jesus. O you who have thought of yourself other than the truth, I do not counsel you to despair. At the sight of the truth I do not counsel you to say, "I will give it all up; there is no hope." "No," Christ says, "be advised; take counsel; I counsel you to come to me now and get in very truth all that which you only had in fancy. All things are ready for you. You have not to search for the gold and dig it up from the mine: here it is: come and buy it." "Lord, I have not a penny to buy it with." That does not matter; buy it without money and without price. These are the easy terms of the gracious Saviour. Believe, and be rich. When Satan tells me, or conscience tells me, that I am

not a Christian, that I am not saved, then I find it wise to say, "I will begin now. If I have made a mistake, if I have been presumptuous, if I have not truly believed, then I will believe at once, and lay hold upon Jesus at this good hour.

I recommend you who are not puffed up to take Christ's counsel, for when he counsels these proud ones to come I am sure his advice is good for you too. It is always wise to get gold when you can buy it for nothing. I warrant you if the Bank of England put up a notification that they would sell any quantity of pure bullion for nothing to-morrow morning, our Stock Exchange men, instead of turning into Capel Court, would take the other side of the street, and dispose at once of the Bank's surplus. There is a ready market for pure gold at this extraordinary minimum. Come, then, and accept the gold of free grace. It is sure to be useful; therefore come along, you that love Christ, and you that are afraid you do not love him. Come along, all of you: come and buy this "gold tried in the fire." You have never made a better investment in all your lives. May the good Master sweetly lead you so to do.

But what a rebuke this is to all boasting. The Lord does not say to us, "You have been very foolish in talking about your riches," but he convicts us by saying, "I counsel thee to buy gold." He does not say, "You are stupid to glory in your dress," but he convicts us by saying, "Buy raiment." He does not condemn us for pretending to be able to see when we are blind, but he cries, "Anoint your eyes with eyesalve." Is not this a sweet way of making us feel our error? Perhaps you would turn away from stern rebuke, but you cannot turn from love. Come now, members of this church and members of no church, come, buy these three precious things, "without money and without price." You cannot take better counsel than that of the Son of God; therefore, do as he bids you, and buy at once.

TWENTY-TWO
THE LOVED ONES CHASTENED

SERMON GIVEN ON NOVEMBER 22, 1857

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 3:19

FROM: NEW PARK STREET PULPIT VOLUME 3

*"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be
zealous therefore, and repent."*

REVELATION 3:19

The dealings of God towards the sons of men have always puzzled the wise men of the earth who have tried to understand them. Apart from the revelation of God the dealings of Jehovah towards his creatures in this world seem to be utterly inexplicable. Who can understand how it is that the wicked flourish and are in great power? The ungodly man flourishes like a green bay tree; behold, he stretcheth out his roots by the river: he knoweth not the year of drought; his leaf withereth not; and his fruit doth not fall in an untimely season. Lo, these are the ungodly that flourish in the world; they are filled with

riches; they heap up gold like dust; they leave the rest of their substance to their babes; they add field to field, and acre to acre, and they become the princes of the earth. On the other hand, see how the righteous are cast down. How often is virtue dressed in the rags of poverty! How frequently is the most pious spirit made to suffer from hunger, and thirst, and nakedness! We have sometimes heard the Christian say, when he has contemplated these things, "Surely, I have served God in vain; it is for nothing that I have chastened myself every morning and vexed my soul with fasting; for lo, God hath cast me down, and he lifteth up the sinner. How can this be?" The sages of the heathen could not answer this question, and they therefore adopted the expedient of cutting the gordian knot. "We can not tell how it is," they might have said; therefore they flew at the fact itself, and denied it. "The man that prospers is favored of the gods; the man who is unsuccessful is obnoxious to the Most High." So said the heathen, and they knew no better. Those more enlightened easterns, who talked with Job in the days of his affliction, got but little further; for they believed that all who served God would have a hedge about them; God would multiply their wealth and increase their happiness; while they saw in Job's affliction, as they conceived, a certain sign that he was a hypocrite, and therefore God had quenched his candle and put out his light in darkness. And alas! even Christians have fallen into the same error. They have been apt to think, that if God lifts a man up there must be some excellence in him; and if he chastens and afflicts, they are generally led to think that it must be an exhibition of wrath. Now hear ye the text, and the riddle is all unriddled; listen ye to the words of Jesus, speaking to his servant John, and the mystery is all unmysteried. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent."

The fact is, that this world is not the place of punishment.

There may now and then be eminent judgments; but as a rule God does not in the present state fully punish any man for sin. He allows the wicked to go on in their wickedness; he throws the reins upon their necks; he lets them go on unbridled in their lusts; some checks of conscience there may be; but these are rather, as monitions than as punishments. And, on the other hand, he casts the Christian down; he gives the most afflictions to the most pious; perhaps he makes more waves of trouble roll over the breast of the most sanctified Christian than over the heart of any other man living. So, then, we must remember that as this world is not the place of punishment, we are to expect punishment and reward in the world to come; and we must believe that the only reason, then, why God afflicts his people must be this:—

*"In love I correct thee, thy gold to refine,
To make thee at length in my likeness to shine."*

I shall try this morning to notice, first, what it is in his children that God corrects; secondly, why God corrects them; and thirdly, what is our comfort, when we are laboring under the rebukes and correctings of our God. Our comfort must be the fact that he loves us even then. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten."

I. First, then, beloved, WHAT IS IT IN THE CHRISTIAN THAT GOD REBUKES? One of the Articles of the Church of England saith right truly, that, naturally, "man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit; and therefore in every person born into this world, it deserveth God's wrath and damnation. And this infection of nature doth remain, yea in them that are regenerated; whereby the lust of the flesh, called in the Greek, *phronema sarkos*,

which some do expound the wisdom, some sensuality, some the affection, some the desire, of the flesh, is not subject to the Law of God. And although there is no condemnation for them that believe and are baptized, yet the Apostle doth confess, that concupiscence and lust hath of itself the nature of sin," and because evil remains in the regenerate there is therefore a necessity that that evil should be upbraided. Ay, and a necessity that when that upbraiding is not sufficient, God should go to severer measures, and after having failed in his rebukes, adopt the expedient of chastening. "I rebuke and chasten." Hence God has provided means for the chastisement and the rebuking of his people. Sometimes God rebukes his children under the ministry. The minister of the gospel is not always to be a minister of consolation. The same Spirit that is the Comforter is he who convinces the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; and the same minister who is to be as the angel of God unto our souls, uttering sweet words that are full of honey, is to be at times the rod of God, the staff in the hand of the Almighty, with which to smite us on account of our transgressions. And ah! beloved, how often under the ministry ought we to have been checked when we were not? Perhaps the minister's words were very forcible, and they were uttered with true earnestness, and they applied to our case; but alas! we shut our ear to them, and applied them to our brother instead of to ourselves. I have often marveled when I have been preaching. I have thought that I have described the cases of some of my most prominent members. I have marked in them diverse sins, and as Christ's faithful pastor, I have not shunned to picture their case in the pulpit, that they might receive a well-deserved rebuke; but I have marveled when I have spoken to them afterward, that they have thanked me for what I have said, because they thought it so applicable to such another brother in the church, whilst I had intended it wholly for them, and had, as I thought,

so made the description accurate, and so brought it out in all its little points, that it must have been received by them. But alas! you know, my friends, that we sit under the sound of the Word, and we seldom think how much it belongs to us, especially if we hold an office in the Church. It is hard for a minister when he is hearing a brother minister preach, to think, it may be, he has a word of rebuke to me. If exalted to the office of elder or deacon, there groweth sometimes with that office a callousness to the Word when spoken to himself; and the man in office is apt to think of the hundreds of inquirers unto whom that may be found applicable, and of the multitudes of the babes in grace to whom such a word comes in season. Ay, friends, if we did but listen more to the rebukes of God in the ministry, if we hearkened more to his Word as he speaks to us every Sabbath day, we might be spared many corrections, for we are not corrected until we have despised rebukes, and after we have rejected those, then out comes the rod.

Sometimes, again, God rebukes his children in their consciences, without any visible means whatever. Ye that are the people of God will acknowledge that there are certain times, when, apparently without any instrumentality, your sins are brought to remembrance; your soul is cast down within you, and your spirit is sore vexed. God the Holy Spirit is himself making inquisition for sin; he is searching Jerusalem with candles; he is so punishing you because you are settled on your lees. If you look around you there is nothing that could cause your spirits to sink. The family are not sick; your business prospers; your body is in good health; why then this sinking of spirit? You are not conscious at the time, perhaps, that you have committed any gross act of sin; still this dark depression continues, and at last you discover that you had been living in a sin which you did not know—some sin of ignorance, hidden and unperceived, and therefore God did withdraw from you the joy

of his salvation, till you had searched your heart, and discovered wherein the evil lay. We have much reason to bless God that he does adopt this way sometimes of rebuking us before he chastens.

At other seasons, the rebuke is quite indirect. How often have I met rebuke, where it never was intended to be given! But God overruled the circumstance for good. Have you never been rebuked by a child? The innocent little prattler uttered something quite unwittingly, which cut you to your heart, and manifested your sin. You walked the street, may hap, and you heard some man swear; and the thought perhaps struck your mind, "How little am I doing for the reclaiming of those who are abandoned!" And so, the very sight of sin accused you of negligence, and the very hearing of evil was made use of by God to convince you of another evil. Oh! if we kept our eyes open, there is not an ox in the meadow, nor a sparrow in the tree, which might not sometimes suggest a rebuke. There is not a star in midnight, there is not a ray in the noon-day, but what might suggest to us some evil that is hidden in our hearts, and lead us to investigate our inner man, if we were but awake to the soft whispers, of Jehovah's rebukes. You know, our Saviour made use of little things to rebuke his disciples. He said, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. Behold the fowls of the air, how they are fed!" So he made lilies and ravens speak to his disciples, to upbraid their discontent. Earth is full of monitors: all that we need are, ears to hear. However, when these rebukes all fail, God proceeds from rebuke to correction. He will not always chide; but, if his rebukes are unheeded, then he grasps the rod, and he uses it. I need not tell you how it is that God uses the rod. My brethren, you have all been made to tingle with it. He has sometimes smitten you in your persons, sometimes in your families, frequently in your estates, oftentimes in your prospects. He has smitten you in your

nearest and dearest friend; or, worse still, it may be he has given you "a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet you." But you all understand, if you know anything of the life of a Christian, what the rod, and the staff, and the covenant are; and what it is to be corrected by God. Let me just particularize for a few minutes, and show what it is that God corrects in us.

Very frequently, God corrects inordinate affection. It is right of us to love our relatives—it is wrong of us to love them more than God. You, perhaps, are yourselves to-day guilty of this sin. At any rate, beloved, we may most of us look at home when we come to dwell on this point. Have we not some favored one—perhaps, the partner of our heart, or the offspring of our bosom, more dear to us than life itself? Have I not heard some man whose life is bound up in the life of the lad, his child?—some mother, whose soul is knit into the soul of her babe—some wife, some husband, to whom the loss of the partner would be the loss of life? Oh, there are many of us who are guilty of inordinate affection toward relations. Mark you, God will rebuke us for that. He will rebuke us in this way. Sometimes he will rebuke us by the minister; if that is not enough, he will rebuke us by sending sickness or disease to those very persons upon whom we have set our hearts; and if that rebuke us not, and if we are not zealous to repent, he will chasten us: the sickness shall yet be unto death. The disease shall break forth with more fearful violence, and the thing which we have made our idol shall be smitten, and shall become the food of worms. There never was an idol that God either did not, or will not pull out of its place. "I am the Lord thy God; I am a jealous God;" and if we put any, however good and excellent their characters may be, and however deserving of our affection, upon God's throne, God will cry, "Down with it," and we shall have to weep many tears; but if we had not

done so, we might have preserved the treasure, and have enjoyed it far better, without having lost it.

But other men are baser than this. One can easily overlook the fault of making too much of children, and wife, and friends, although very grievous in the sight of God; but alas! there are some that are too sordid to love flesh and blood; they love dirt, mere dirty earth, yellow gold. It is that on which they set their hearts. Their purse, they tell us, is dross; but when we come to take aught from it, we find they do not think it is so. "Oh," said a man once, "if you want a subscription from me, Sir, you must get at my heart, and then you will get at my purse." "Yes," said I, "I have no doubt I shall, for I believe that is where your purse lies, and I shall not be very far off from it." And how many there are who call themselves Christians, who make a god out of their wealth! Their park, their mansion, their estate, their warehouses, their large ledgers, their many clerks, their expanding business, or if not these, their opportunity to retire, their money in the Three per Cents. All these things are their idols and their gods; and we take them into our churches, and the world finds no fault with them. They are prudent men. You know many of them; they are very respectable people, they hold many respectable positions, and they are so prudent, only that the love of money, which is the root of all evil, is in their hearts too plainly to be denied. Every one may see it, though, perhaps, they see it not themselves. "Covetousness, which is idolatry," reigns very much in the church of the living God. Well, mark you, God will chasten for that. Whosoever loveth mammon among God's people shall first be rebuked for it, as he is rebuked by me this day, and if that rebuke be not taken, there shall be a chastisement given. It may be, that the gold shall melt like the snow-flake before the sun; or if it be preserved, it shall be said, "Your gold and silver are cankered; the moth shall eat up your garments, and destroy your glory." Or else, the Lord

will bring leanness into their souls, and cause them to go down to their graves with few honors on their heads, and with little comfort in their hearts, because they loved their gold more than their God, and valued earthly riches more than the riches that are eternal. The Lord save us from that, or else he will surely correct us.

But this is not the only sin: we are all subject to another crime which God abhors exceedingly. It is the sin of pride. If the Lord gives us a little comfort, we grow so big that we hardly know what to do with ourselves. Like Jeshurun of old, of whom it is said, "Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked." Let us for a little time enjoy the full assurance of faith; self-conceit whispers, "You will retain the savor of that all your days;" and there is not quite a whisper, but something even fainter than that—"You have no need to depend upon the influence of the Holy Spirit now. See what a great man you have grown. You have become one of the Lord's most valued people; you are a Samson; you may pull down the very gates of hell and fear not. You have no need to cry, 'Lord, have mercy upon me.' " Or at other times, it takes a different turn. He gives us temporal mercies, and then we presumptuously say, "My mountain standeth firm; I shall never be moved." We meet with the poor saints, and we begin to hector over them, as if we were something, and they were nothing. We find some in trouble; we have no sympathy with them; we are bluff and blunt with them, as we talk with them about their troubles; yea, we are even savage and cruel with them. We meet with some who are in deep distress and faint-hearted; we begin to forget when we were faint-hearted too, and because they cannot run as fast as we can, we run far ahead, and turn back and look at them, call them sluggards, and say they are idle and lazy. And perhaps even in the pulpit, if we are preachers, we have got hard words to say against those who are not quite so advanced as we are. Well, mark, there never

was a saint yet, that grew proud of his fine feathers, but what the Lord plucked them out by-and-by. There never yet was an angel that had pride in his heart, but he lost his wings, and fell into Gehenna, as Satan and those fallen angels did; and there shall never be a saint who indulges self-conceit, and pride, and self-confidence, but the Lord will spoil his glories, and trample his honors in the mire, and make him cry out yet again, "Lord, have mercy upon me," less than the least of all saints, and the "very chief of sinners."

Another sin that God rebukes, is sloth. Now I need not stop to picture that. How many of you are the finest specimens of sloth that can be discovered! I mean not in a business sense, for you are "not slothful in business;" but with regard to the things of God, and the cause of truth, why, nine out of ten of all the professors of religion, I do hazard the assertion, are as full of sloth as they can be. Take our churches all around, and there is not a corporation in the world, however corrupt, that is less attentive to its professed interest, than the church of Christ. There certainly are many societies and establishments in the world that deserve much blame for not attending to those interests which they ought to promote; but I do think the Church of God is the hugest culprit of all. She says that she is the preacher of the gospel to the poor: does she preach it to them? Yes, here and there: now and then there is a spasmodic effort: but how many are there that have got tongues to speak, and ability to utter God's Word that are content to be still! She professes to be the educator of the ignorant, and she is so in a measure: there are many of you who have no business to be here this morning—you ought to have been teaching in the Sabbath-school, or instructing the young, and teaching others. Ye have no need of teachers just now; ye have learned the truth and should have been teaching it to other people. The church professes that she is yet to cast the light of the gospel

throughout the world. She does a little in missionary enterprise; but ah! how little! how little! how little compared with what her Master did for her and the claims of Jesus upon her! We are a lazy set. Take the church all round, we are as idle as we can be; and we need to have some whipping times of persecution, to whip a little more earnestness and zeal into us. We thank God this is not so much the case now, as it was even twelve months ago. We hope the church may progress in her zeal; for if not, she, as a whole, and each of us as members, will be first rebuked, and if we take not the rebuke, we shall afterwards be chastened for this our great sin.

I have no time to enter into all the other reasons for which God will rebuke and chasten. Suffice it to say that every sin has one twig in God's rod appropriated to itself. Suffice it to say, that in God's hand there are punishments for each particular transgression; and it is very singular to notice how in Bible history almost every saint has been chastened for the sin he has committed by the sin itself falling upon his own head. Transgression has been first a pleasure, and afterward it has been a scourge. "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways," and that is the severest punishment in all the world.

Thus I have tried to open the first head—it is that God rebukes and chastens.

II. Now, secondly, WHY DOES GOD REBUKE AND CHASTEN? "Why," says one, "God rebukes his children because they are his children; and he chastens them because they are his children." Well, I will not go the length of saying that is false, but I will go the length of saying it is not true. If any one should say to a father, after he had chastened his child, "Why is it you have chastened the child?" he would not say, it is because I am his father. It is true in one sense; but he would say, "I have chastened the child because he has done wrong." Because the proximate reason why he had chastened his child

would not be that he was his father, though that would have something to do with it as a primary reason; but the absolute and primary cause would be, "I have chastened him because he has done wrong, because I wish to correct him for it, that he might not do so again." Now, God, when he chastens his children, never does it absolutely; because he is his father; but he does it for a wise reason. He has some other reason besides his fatherhood. At the same time, one reason why God afflicts his children and not others, is because he is their Father. If you were to go home to-day and see a dozen boys in the streets throwing stones and breaking windows it is very likely you would start the whole lot of them; but if there is one boy that would get a sweet knock on the head it would be your own; for you would say, "What are you at, John? What business have you here?" You might not be justified, perhaps, in meddling with the others—you would let their own fathers attend to them; but because you were his father, you would try to make him remember it. Certain special chastisements are inflicted on God's children, because they are his children; but it is not because they are his children that he chastens them at any one time, but because they have been doing something wrong. Now, if you are under chastisement, let this truth be certain to you. Are the consolations of God small with thee? Is there any secret thing with thee? Art thou chastened in thy business? Then what sin hast thou committed? Art thou cast down in thy spirit? Then what transgression has brought this on thee? Remember, it is not fair to say, "I am chastened because I am his child;" the right way to say it is, "I am his child, and therefore when he chastens me he has a reason for it." Now, what is it? I will help you to judge.

Sometimes God chastens and afflicts us, to prevent sin. He sees that the embryo of lust is in our hearts; he sees that that little egg of mischief is beginning to hatch and to produce sin,

and he comes and crushes it at once—nips the sin in the bud. Ah! we cannot tell how much guilt Christians have been saved from by their afflictions. We are running on madly to our destruction, and then some dark apparition of trouble comes, and stretches itself across the way, and in great fright we fly back astonished. We ask, why this trouble? Oh! if we knew the danger into which we were rushing we should only say, "Lord, I thank thee that by that direful trouble thou didst save me from a sin, that would have been far more troublous and infinitely more dangerous."

At other times God chastens us for sins already committed. We perhaps have forgotten them; but God has not. I think that sometimes years elapse between a sin and the chastisement for it. The sins of our youth may be punished in our gray old age; the transgression you did twenty years ago, those of you who have grown old, may this very day be found in your bones. God chastens his children, but he sometimes lays the rod by. The time would not be seasonable perhaps; they are not strong enough to bear it: so he lays the rod by and he says, as surely as he is my child, though I lay the rod by, I will make him smart for it, that I may at last deliver him from his sin, and make him like unto myself. But mark, ye people of God, in all these chastisements for sin there is no punishment. When God chastises you he does not punish as a judge does, but he chastens as a father. When he lays the rod on, with many blows and smart ones, there is not one thought of anger in his heart—there is not one look of displeasure in his eye; he means it all for your good; his heaviest blows are as much tokens of his affection as his sweetest caresses. He has no motive but your profit and his own glory. Be of good cheer, then, if these be the reasons. But take care that thou dost fulfil the command—"Be zealous, therefore, and repent."

I read in an old Puritan author the other day a very pretty

figure. He says, "A full wind is not so favorable to a ship when it is fully fair as a side wind. It is strange," says he, "that when the wind blows in an exact direction to blow a ship into port, she will not go near so well as if she had a cross wind sideways upon her." And he explains it thus: "The mariners say that when the wind blows exactly fair it only fills a part of the sails, and it can not reach the sails that are ahead, because the sail, bellying out with the wind, prevents the wind from reaching that which is further ahead. But when the wind sweeps sideways, then every sail is full, and she is driven on swiftly in her course with the full force of the wind. Ah!" says the old Puritan, "there is nothing like a side wind to drive God's people to heaven. A fair wind only fills a part of their sails; that is, fills their joy, fills their delight; but," says he, "the side wind fills them all; it fills their caution, fills their prayerfulness, fills every part of the spiritual man, and so the ship speeds onward toward its haven." It is with this design that God sends affliction, to chasten us on account of our transgressions.

III. And now I am to conclude by noting WHAT IS OUR COMFORT WHEN GOD REBUKES AND CHASTENS US?

Our great comfort is, that he loves us still. Oh! what a precious thing faith is, when we are enabled to believe our God, and how easy then it is to endure and to surmount all trouble. Hear the old man in the garret, with a crust of bread and a cup of cold water. Sickness has confined him these years within that narrow room. He is too poor to maintain an attendant. Some woman comes in to look to him in the morning and in the evening, and there he sits, in the depths of poverty. And you will suppose he sits and groans. No, brethren; he may sometimes groan when the body is weak, but usually he sits and sings; and when the visitor climbs the creaking staircase of that old house, where human beings scarcely ought to be allowed to

live; and when he goes into that poor cramped up room that is more fit to accommodate swine than men, he sits down upon that bottomless chair, and when he has seated himself as well as he can upon the four cross pieces of it he begins to talk to him, and he finds him full of heaven. "Oh! sir," he says, "my God is very kind to me." Propped up he is with pillows, and full of pain in every member of his body, but he says, "Blessed be his name, he has not left me. Oh! sir, I have enjoyed more peace and happiness in this room, out of which I have not gone for years,"—(the case is real that I am now describing) "I have enjoyed more happiness here than I ever did in all my life. My pains are great, sir, but they will not be for long; I am going home soon." Ay, were he more troubled still, had he such rich consolation poured into his heart, he might endure all with a smile and sing in the furnace. Now, child of God, thou art to do the same. Remember, all thou hast to suffer is sent in love. It is hard work for a child, when his father has been chastening it, to look at the rod as a picture of love. You cannot make your children do that: but when they grow up to be men and women how thankful they are to you then! "O father," says the son, "I know now why it was I was so often chastened; I had a proud hot spirit; it would have been the ruin of me if thou hadst not whipped it out of me. Now, I thank thee, my father, for it."

So, while we are here below we are nothing but little children; we can not prize the rod: when we come of age, and we go into our estates in Paradise, we shall look back upon the rod of the Covenant as being better than Aaron's rod, for it blossoms with mercy. We shall say to it, "Thou art the most wondrous thing in all the list of my treasures. Lord, I thank thee that thou didst not leave me unafflicted, or else I had not been where I am, and what I am, a child of God in Paradise." "I have this week," says one, "sustained so serious a loss in my business, that I am afraid I shall be utterly broken up." There is love in that. "I

came here this morning," says one, "and I left a dead child in the house—dear to my heart." There is love in that. That coffin and that shroud will both be full of love; and when your child is taken away, it shall not be in anger. "Ah!" cries another, "but I have been exceedingly sick, and even now I feel I ought not to have ventured out; I must return to my bed." Ah! he makes your bed in your affliction. There is love in every pain, in every twitch of the nerve; in every pang that shoots through the members, there is love. "Ah!" says one, "it is not myself, but I have got a dear one that is sick." There is love there, too. Do what God may, he cannot do an unloving act toward his people. O Lord! thou art Omnipotent; thou canst do all things; but thou canst not lie, and thou canst not be unkind to thine elect. No, Omnipotence may build a thousand worlds, and fill them with bounties; Omnipotence may powder mountains into dust, and burn the sea, and consume the sky, but Omnipotence cannot do an unloving thing toward a believer. Oh! rest quite sure, Christian, a hard thing, an unloving thing from God toward one of his own people is quite impossible. He is kind to you when he casts you into prison as when he takes you into a palace; He is as good when he sends famine into your house as when he fills your barns with plenty. The only question is, Art thou his child? If so, he hath rebuked thee in affection, and there is love in his chastisement.

I have now done, but not until I have made my last appeal. I have now to turn from God's people to the rest of you. Ah! my hearers, there are some of you that have no God; you have no Christ on whom to cast your troubles. I see some of you to-day dressed in the habiliments of mourning; I suppose you have lost some one dear unto you. Oh! ye that are robed in black, is God your God? Or are you mourning now, without God to wipe every tear from your eye? I know that many of you are struggling now in your business with very sharp and hard times. Can

you tell your troubles to Jesus, or have you to bear them all yourself—friendless and helpless? Many men have been driven mad, because they had no one to whom to communicate their sorrow; and how many others had been driven worse than mad, because when they told their sorrows their confidence was betrayed. O poor mourning spirit, if thou hadst, as thou mightest have done, gone and told him all thy woes, he would not have laughed at thee, and he would never have told it out again. Oh I remember when once my young heart ached in boyhood, when I first loved the Saviour. I was far away from father and mother, and all I loved, and I thought my soul would burst; for I was an usher in a school, in a place where I could meet with no sympathy or help. Well, I went to my chamber, and told my little griefs into the ears of Jesus. They were great griefs to me then, though they are nothing now. When I just whispered them on my knees into the ear of him who had loved me with an everlasting love, oh! it was so sweet, none can tell. If I had told them to somebody else, they would have told them again; but he, my blessed confidant, he knows my secrets, and he never tells them. Oh! what can you do that have got no Jesus to tell your troubles to? And the worst of it is, you have got more troubles to come. Times may be hard now, but they will be harder one day—they will be harder when they come to an end. They say it is hard to live, but it is very hard to die. When one comes to die and has Jesus with him, even then dying is hard work; but to die without a Saviour! Oh! my friends, are you inclined to risk it? Will you face the grim monarch, and no Saviour with you? Remember, you must do it; you must die soon. The chamber shall soon be hushed in silence no sound shall be heard except the babbling watch that ever tells the flight of time. The physician shall "Hush!" and hold up his finger, and whisper in a suppressed voice, "He can not last many minutes longer." And the wife and the children, or the

father and the mother, will stand around your bed and look at you, as I have looked at some, with a sad, sad heart. They will look at you a little while, till at last the death-change will pass o'er your face. "He is gone!" it shall be said; and the hand uplifted shall be dropped down again, and the eye shall be glazed in darkness, and then the mother will turn away and say, "O my child, I could have borne all this if there had been hope in thine end!" And when the minister comes in to comfort the family, he will ask the question of the father, "Do you think your son had an interest in the blood of Christ?" The reply will be, "O sir, we must not judge, but I never saw anything like it; I never had any reason to hope: that is my greatest sorrow." There, there! I could bury every friend without a tear, compared with the burial of an ungodly friend. Oh! it seems such an awful thing, to have one allied to you by ties of blood, dead and in hell.

We generally speak very softly about the dead. We say, "Well, we hope." Sometimes we tell great lies, for we know we do not hope at all. We wish it may be so, but we cannot hope it; we never saw any grounds that should lead us to hope. But would it not be an awful thing if we were honest enough to look the dread reality in its face—if the husband were simply to look at it, and say, "There was my wife; she was an ungodly, careless woman. I know at least, she never said anything concerning repentance and faith; and if she died so, and I have every reason to fear she did, then she is cast away from God." It would be unkind to say it; but it is only honest for us to know it—to look dread truth in the face. Oh! my fellow-men and brethren, oh! ye that are partners with me of an immortal life! We shall one day meet again before the throne of God; but ere that time comes, we shall each of us be separated, and go our divers ways down the shelving banks of the river of death. My fellow-man, art thou prepared to die alone? I ask thee this ques-

tion again—Art thou prepared to arise in the day of judgment without a Saviour? Art thou willing to run all risks and face thy Maker, when he comes to judge thee, without an advocate to plead thy cause? Art thou prepared to hear him say, "Depart ye cursed!" Are ye ready now to endure the everlasting ire of him who smites, and smiting once, doth smite forever? Oh! if ye will make your bed in hell, if you are prepared to be damned, if you are willing to be so, then live in sin and indulge in pleasures;—you will get your wish. But if ye would not; if ye would enter heaven, and ye would be saved, "Turn thee, turn thee, why will ye die, O house of Israel?" May God the Holy Spirit, enable you to repent of sin and to believe on Jesus; and then you shall have a portion among them that are sanctified: but unrepenting and unbelieving, if ye die so, ye must be driven from his presence, never to have life, and joy, and liberty, as long as eternity shall last.

The Lord prevent this, for Jesus, sake.

REVELATION 4

TWENTY-THREE
A DOOR OPENED IN HEAVEN

SERMON GIVEN ON AUGUST 22, 1869

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 4:1

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 15

*“After this I looked, and, behold, a door was
opened in heaven.”*

REVELATION 4:1

How highly favoured was the apostle John! While his Master was on earth he was the favoured disciple, permitted to lean his head upon his bosom, as a token of the most familiar and loving intercourse. After our Lord had ascended, he had the same heart towards John, and, finding him alone amidst the wild rocks of Patmos, he visited him on the Lord's-day, and revealed himself to him in a most glorious manner. Brethren and sisters, if heaven should offer any one thing which we might choose, if ever the Lord should appear to us as he did to Solomon, and

say, "Ask what thou wilt, and it shall be given thee," be it ours to make request that we may enjoy the closest possible fellowship with the Wellbeloved. If we might choose our portion among the sons of men, we could not select a happier, a holier, a more honourable lot, than to abide in hallowed fellowship with Jesus, even as did the beloved disciple. Remember John has not this privilege reserved unto himself. The innermost circle of fellowship is not for the seer of Patmos alone; there is room upon the bosom of Christ for other heads than his; the innermost heart of Jesus is large enough to hold more than one beloved. Despair not of gaining the choicest place! It is not easy to ascend into the hill of the Lord, and to stand in his holy place, but if thou be pure in heart, if thou be fervent in spirit, if thou be purged from earthly dross, and if thou surrender thyself as a chaste virgin unto Christ, thou mayst— even thou mayst yet attain unto his rare and choice privilege of abiding in Christ, and enjoying without ceasing, his love shed abroad in thy heart by the Holy Ghost.

Leaving John, however, to whom the door in heaven was so remarkably opened that his vision of the spiritual world excelled all others, we will content ourselves with gathering up the crumbs from his table while we muse upon one of the descriptions which fell from his pen. John says, "A door was opened in heaven," and I believe the first meaning of the statement is that he was permitted to gaze into the secret and mysterious spirit-land, and to behold things which have not at any other time been seen of mortal eyes. That, I think, to be the first meaning; yet, if we append another sense to it, we shall not be departing from the truth, even if we depart from the immediate connection of the text. We shall regard this door opened in heaven in three ways. First, there is a door of intercourse between God and man; secondly, and more closely the meaning of the text, a door of observation has been opened

with regard to the glories of the saints; and thirdly, by-and-by, to each of us there will be a door of entrance opened, by which we shall enter in through the golden gate into the city.

I. First, then, A DOOR OF INTERCOURSE has been opened in heaven.

The angels fell. Far back in the ancient ages, Lucifer, the son of the morning, rebelled against his liege Lord, and led a multitude of subordinate spirits to revolt. These having proved traitors, were expelled from heaven, hurled like lightning from the battlements of glory down into the depths of woe. For them no door was opened in heaven. Mysterious as is the fact, it is nevertheless clear that no mercy was shown to fallen angels. He who will have mercy upon whom he will have mercy, and will have compassion on whom he will have compassion, suffered those once bright and illustrious spirits who had revolted, to continue in their revolt without a proclamation of pardon to suggest repentance; he allowed them to continue in their revolt, delivered unto chains of darkness to be reserved unto judgment. Man also, soon after his creation, broke his Maker's law, placing himself thereby in the same position as the fallen angels. Man had no greater claim upon God's mercy than the devils! Nay, if anything, if claim could be, he had less, seeing the restoration of so insignificant a being was far less important than the rekindling of the stars of heaven, while his destruction would be far less loss than the overthrow of the angelic spirits. Yet the Lord in his sovereignty, for reasons that he knoweth, but which he hath not revealed to us, was pleased to look upon the sons of men with singular favour, determining that in them his grace should be revealed. The devils, as vessels of wrath, are reserved unto judgment; but the sons of men, as vessels of mercy, are prepared for glory. Against angels who kept not their first estate, heaven is straitly shut up; but for men, a door is opened in heaven. Herein is matchless grace, combined with

absolute sovereignty, furnishing us with a display of election upon the largest scale, against the truth of which none can raise debate; for whatever objectors may affirm against the choice of some men and not of others, they cannot deny but that God hath chosen men rather than angels; neither can they explain any more than we can, the reason why the Saviour took not up angels, but took up the seed of Abraham. Beyond all question, it is to the praise of divine grace that we are able to declare that for the human race a door is opened in heaven.

A door of intercourse was virtually opened in the covenant of grace, when the sacred persons of the divine Trinity entered into solemn league and compact that the chosen should be redeemed, that an offering should be presented by which sin should be atoned for and God's broken law should be vindicated. In that covenant council chamber where the sacred Three combined to plan the salvation of the chosen, a door was virtually opened in heaven, and it was through that door that the saints who lived and died before the coming of Christ passed into their rest. It was this door which was at the head of the ladder which Jacob saw, through which the angels ascended and descended, keeping up communion between God and man. Blessed be God, the effect of the Saviour's blood reached backward as well as forward. Before it was shed, the anticipation of the blood-shedding availed with God for the salvation of his people.

But, dear brethren, the door was actually and evidently opened when our Lord Jesus came down to the sons of men to sojourn in their flesh. What, doth the Infinite veil himself in an infant's form? Doth the pure and holy God dwell here on earth amongst unholy men? Doth God speak through those lips of tenderness, and doth God's light beam through those eyes of love? It is even so. The Son of Mary was the Son of God, and he that suffered, he that bore our sicknesses, he upon whom our

sins were laid, was no other than God over all. The Word which was God, and was in the beginning with God, was made flesh and tabernacled among us. Surely there was a door opened in heaven then, for if the Godhead comes into actual union with manhood, man and God are no more divided by bars and gates. It cannot be impossible that manhood should go up to God, seeing God has come down to man. If God condescendeth thus, it must be with a motive and a reason, and there is hope for poor humanity; there are stars in the darkness of our fallen state. Immanuel, God with us, the Virgin's child, the Son of the Highest, is he among us? Then a door is opened in heaven indeed. The angels knew this, for through the open door they came trooping forth with songs of joy and gladness, hailing the birth of the Prince of Peace; and doubtless the spirits of the just, as they peered through the opened lattice, were glad to behold the union of earth with heaven.

But the door, dear brethren, was not opened even then effectually and completely, for Christ, when he came into the world, had to stand, though in himself pure and holy, in the position of a sinner. "The Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all." Now, where sin is, there is a shutting out from God, and Christ was officially, as our substitute, shut out so long as sin laid upon him. When the transgression of his people was laid on him, and he was numbered with the transgressors, the veil hung down before even him. But oh, remember well how bravely he removed that which hindered! He came up to the cross with the load of sin upon him, a load that would have staggered all the angels, and bowed a universe of human beings to the lowest hell. Up to that cross he came, and there he bare the consequences of his people's guilt. The transgressions of his people were laid on him, and for those iniquities was he smitten; but he bore all the smiting, he drank the cup of wrath to its dregs, and shouting, "It is finished," he took the great veil that

hung up between earth and heaven, and, with one gigantic pull, he rent it from the top to the bottom, never to be put together again, to make an open way between God and man. The veil is rent in twain, heaven is laid open to all believers.

But though our Lord himself, to prove how he had rent that veil, passed through it up to the most holy place, as to his soul, yet you will remember, beloved, that he left his body behind him. That holy thing slumbered in the grave, where it could not see corruption; it was not taken up into the excellent glory, but remained here for forty days. Then, when the appointed weeks were finished, Jesus once again entered heaven; this time taking possession of it for our bodies as well as for our souls. How wondrously David foretold the glorious opening of the gates, when he sang the ascent of the illustrious hero! He rose amid attending angels, ascending not in phantom form, but in a real body, and, as he neared the heavenly portals, holy angels sang, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in!" When on their hinges of diamond, those pearly gates revolved, and Jesus entered, then, once for all and for ever the door was opened in heaven, by which the chosen people shall all of them ascend into the joy of their Lord. At this very hour, as if to show us that he openeth and no man shutteth, we see the door most certainly open, because he has promised to come again, and, therefore, the door cannot be shut, for he is coming quickly. His promise ringeth in our ears, "Behold, I come as a thief! Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments;" yea, blessed are they which are called unto the marriage-supper of the Lamb. Yet again saith he, "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me." Expect him then, and as you expect him, learn that a door is still open in heaven.

Beloved, there is no little comfort in the belief that heaven's gates are opened, because then our prayers, broken-winged as

they are, shall enter there. Though they seem as if they could not mount because of a clogging weight of sorrow, yet shall they enter through that door. Our sighs and tears shall pass. There is no boom across the harbour's mouth; our poor half shipwrecked prayers shall sail into the haven safely. The ports of the glory-land are not blockaded; we have access by Jesus Christ unto the Father; and there is free trade with heaven for poor broken-hearted sinners. Here is consolation, because our songs also shall reach the throne through the opened door. How delightful it is to sing God's praise alone, but much more in company when all our hearts and voices keep tune together in sacred melodies of adoration! But what must our songs be compared with the chorus of the ten thousand times ten thousand I We might fear that ours would be unable to scale the walls of the New Jerusalem, but, lo, a door is opened for their entrance. Moreover, there is access for sinners to God; Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost. You are not shut out of your Father's house, poor prodigal. The door is opened. You have not to stand and knock by the month together with processes of repentance and reformation. A door is opened. Christ is that door. If you come to Christ you have come to God; if you trust in Jesus you are saved. The door to the ark was wide enough to admit the hugest beasts as well as the tiniest animals, and the door into God's mercy is wide enough to let in the greatest sinner as well as the more refined moralist. He that cometh to Christ cometh to heaven; he is sure of heaven who is sure of Christ. Let me cheer every one here who fears that the gate is barred against him. The door is still open. While there is life there is hope. Thou canst not climb to heaven and see thy name left out in the roll, therefore think not that it is left out. Thou canst not turn to the list of souls who will perish for ever; believe not, therefore, that thy name is among them, but rather, since the silver trumpet rings out the invitation, "Come,

labouring and heavy laden, come to Christ, and he will give you rest!" accept the invitation, and you shall find that the God who in mercy gave it, gave you power to comply with it, and gave you the will to accept it, will by no means cast you out.

II. Now we must turn to the second view of the text, which is the one proper to it from its connection. "A door was opened in heaven," it was A DOOR OF OBSERVATION.

It is very little that we can know of the future state, but we may be quite sure that we know as much as is good for us. We ought to be as content with that which is not revealed as with that which is. If God wills us not to know, we ought to be satisfied not to know. Depend on it, he has told us all about heaven that is necessary to bring us there; and if he had revealed more, it would have served rather for the gratification of our curiosity than for the increase of our grace. Yet, brethren, much concerning heaven, much I mean comparatively, may be guessed by spiritual men. There are times when to all who love the Lord, doors are opened in heaven, through which they can by spiritual illumination, see somewhat of the city of the Great King.

And first, a door is opened in heaven whenever we are elevated by the help of God's Spirit to high and ravishing thoughts of the glory of God. Sometimes by investigating the works of nature, we obtain a glimpse of the infinite. More often by beholding the grace and mercy revealed in Jesus Christ, our hearts are warmed towards that blessed One who made us, who sustains us, who redeemed us, to whom we owe all things. My brethren, what joy have we felt in the thought of his presence! it has been bliss to feel that our Father is with us when we are alone, covering us with his feathers in danger, hiding us in peace beneath his shield and buckler in times of alarm. How delightful has it been to serve him, to have a consciousness of doing him some service, poor and imperfect as it is! I think I

know of no delight on earth that is higher than that of knowing that you really are with all your heart adoringly serving God. And what a delight it is, dear brethren, when you can feel in your own soul that you are reconciled to God, that there is no opposition between your desires and God's will, or if there should be, yet not in your heart of hearts, for your soul desires to be perfectly at one with him who made it. How glad we feel when God is glorified, how happy when his saints are honouring his name! What a hallowed thrill shoots through us when another sinner is embraced within the arms of divine mercy! Oh, to see God's kingdom come, and his will done on earth as it is in heaven! brethren, if we might but see this, our prayers would be ended; there is nothing more that we could want if we could once see the whole earth filled with the knowledge of the Lord. This is our greatest joy beneath the sky, to know the Lord to be present, to feel that we are one with him, to catch some glimpses of his glory, and to see that glory appreciated amongst the sons of men, while we also are helping to spread it abroad. Now, if it be so happy a thing to obtain some gleamings of the glory, what will it be when we shall be near to him, and shall behold him face to face? What will be our joy when everything that now separates us from God shall be taken away; when inbred sin, that mars our fellowship, shall be utterly rooted up; when, instead of a little casual and imperfect service, we shall serve him day and night in his temple; when We shall no longer behold sin rampant, but shall see holiness universal all around; when there shall be no idle words to vex our ears, no cursing without, and no thought of sin within to molest us; when the hymn of his glory shall for ever make glad our ear, and our tongue shall joyously help to swell the strain world without end? Why, brethren, we have true views of heaven when our soul is blessed with nearness of access to her Father and her God. The unspiritual know not this. If I

talked to them of harps, and streets of gold, and palms of victory, they might admire the imagery, but of the inner meaning they would know nothing; yet these are your harps, and these your palms, and these your songs, and these your white robes—the beholding of the glory of the Lord, and being transformed into it. To be made like unto your God in purity and true holiness, this is heaven indeed.

A door is opened in heaven, secondly, whenever the meditative spirit is able to perceive Christ Jesus with some degree of clearness. It is true we here see him as in a glass, darkly; but that sight, dark as it is and dim, is transporting to our souls. Do you not know what it is to sit under his shadow with great delight, and to find his fruit sweet unto your taste? The first day you knew Christ, and he spake your pardon to you, why, it was a marriage-day to your soul.

Since that he has opened to you coffers containing priceless treasures; he has taken you into the inner rooms of his treasury, where the richest and best blessings are stored up; and thus your sense of Christ's excellence has been a growing one. You thought him good at first, but now you know him to be better than the best. Now he is "the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely." I am sure, beloved, nothing can so carry you out of yourself above your cares and your present troubles, as to feel that your Beloved is yours, and that you are his. Why, your spirit, like David, dances before the ark of the Lord, when the full beauties of a precious Christ are perceived by your heart. Imagine, then, what must it be to see the Redeemer face to face! To hear but the King's silver trumpets sounding in the distance, doth make the heart to dance, but what must it be to see the King in his beauty in the streets of his own metropolis, where he rideth forth in constant triumph? Have you not known the day when a word from him would have made your spirits like the chariots of Amminadib? what will be your

ecstasy when you hear not a few words, but listen continually to him whose lips are like lilies dropping sweet-smelling myrrh! A stray kiss of those lips has ravished you beyond description, but what will it be when those cheeks that are as beds of spices, as sweet flowers shall for ever be near you, when the full marriage of your soul with the royal spouse shall be come indeed, to your ineffable delight! Perhaps this is a door through which you have often gazed, if so, take not away your eyes, man; take not away your eyes, but through this window of agate, through this gate of carbuncle, gaze ever at the person of your blessed Lord, for in him you may see heaven fully revealed.

We sometimes get a door opened in heaven when we enjoy the work of the Holy Spirit in our souls. The Holy Spirit has breathed over our hearts, and turned tumult and storm into peace profound, like the peace of God's own self. He has given us more than quiet resting, he has filled us with high and exulting thoughts of God, until whether we were in the body or out of the body we could not tell; and then there has come with these great thoughts a flush of joy, as though a well of honey had sprung up at our feet, as though soft breezes from the celestial beds of spices were fanning our cheek. We knew that we were one with Christ by indissoluble, vital union; we grasped the promise, we knew it to be true; we were sure that all covenant blessings were our own; the spirit of sonship was within us; we cried, "Abba, Father!" Faith rejoiced exceedingly, bright-eyed hope laughed for joy, love tuned her harp; the Holy Ghost made a paradise within our hearts, and he himself walked in the garden of our soul in the cool of the day. Right well do some of us know what the Holy Ghost can do for us. We have felt his joy not only in prosperous moments, but in our very darkest times, when our troubles have been multiplied and griefs have threatened to overwhelm us. How, if such it be to

enjoy the presence of the Spirit, brethren, what must it be to dwell in the land where we shall never vex him with our sins, where we shall never quench his sacred influences with our negligences, where we shall never miss the delightful, sensible conscious enjoyment of his love shed abroad in our souls? Ah, if we could always be as we sometimes are! I find it comparatively easy to climb the hill top, but the difficulty is to abide there. We slide down to the valley again so soon, but in glory we shall for ever sit on the top of Amana, with our forehead bathed in the light that streams from an unsetting sun, filled with all the fulness of God, and that for ever and ever. O you that know anything of the blessed Spirit, there is a door opened in heaven for you in his gracious operation, look through it and rejoice at what you see.

Further, brethren, a door is often opened in heaven in the joys of Christian worship. As I was reading over and over again yesterday the forty-second psalm, I could not but note how David doats on the sunny memories of sacred seasons when he went with the multitude with the voice of joy and praise, with the multitude that kept holyday; he remembered the times when he went up to the house of the Lord in the company of his people. Now, it is not always a delightful thing to go to a place of worship, for some places are very much used for sleeping in, and in some others it might be better to be asleep than awake. Many services are so dull, that men attend them as a stern duty, but they find no pleasure in them; but where there is unity, harmony, heartiness, zeal, where the song rolls up with mighty peals like thunder, where the gospel is preached affectionately and faithfully, and the Holy Ghost bedews the whole like the dews that fell on Hermon, oh! it is sweet to be there. Do you not feel sometimes your Sabbaths to be the most blessed portions of your life below the skies? And the assemblies of God's people, what are they to you? Are they not the house of

God and the very gate of heaven! Yes, but, if it be sweet to-day to mingle now with Christians in their praise and prayer, when we are so soon to separate and go our way, how passing sweet that place must be where the saints meet in eternal session of worship, where the King is always with them, where there is never a dreary service, where the song never, never, never ceases, where no discord mars it, and no harp is hung upon the willows:

*"There no tongue can silent be,
All shall join the harmony."*

Why, if there were no other door in heaven than these blessed Sabbath gatherings, and the sweet enjoyments of the assemblies of the saints, surely this would be enough to make us long to be there.

Another door is opened in heaven in the fellowship which we enjoy with the saints on earth. "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another," and thus they obtained one of the most delightful joys to be had this side the golden gate. Though we love all the saints, have we not some who are our peculiars, to whom we take the doors of our heart right off their hinges and say to them, "Come in, for in sympathy and experience I am one with you, come in and converse with me." Brethren, if common Christian communion be very sweet, and I know that as church members we have found it so, how much sweeter it will be to meet with the more eminent of the saints! What meetings heaven will see! I imagine .Saul meeting Stephen. He aided the persecutors who stoned the martyred Stephen, and yet out of the ashes of a Stephen there springs a Paul! What a grip of the hand they will give each other on the other side of Jordan! When holy bright spirits meet, why, I would sooner far watch their salutations than the occultations of the moons of

Jupiter; it will be grand to see these celestial bodies casting their shadows as it were for awhile athwart each other, as they come into the closest contact in the skies. And do not you delight to think that you shall meet the apostles, that you shall meet David and Abraham, that you shall have communion with Luther and Calvin, Wesley and Whitfield, and men of whom the world was not worthy? Some have doubted whether there will be recognition in heaven; there is no room for doubt, for it is called "my Father's house;" and shall not the family be known to each other? We are to "sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob," and we shall therefore know these patriarchal saints; we shall not sit down with men in iron masks, and see none but great unknowns; but we shall "know even as we are known." Doubtless even before the body rises, there will be marks and peculiarities of constitution about disembodied spirits by which we shall be able to detect them, and shall hold felicitous intelligent intercourse with them. Ah! well, ye grey-headed saints, your best friends have gone before ye, and the thought of seeing them may well make you long to be on the wing. Your dearest ones are on the hither side of Jordan, they went to their heritage a long while ago; they abide in the land of the living, while you still linger in the land of the dying. Press forward! Set loose by earth. Let immortal fingers beckon you towards the dwelling places of the saints in the land of the hereafter. How the prospect of future communion ought to make the saints love one another, because ours is no earthly love which must end at the grave; our union and communion in Christ will outlast both sun and moon. Our love in Christ Jesus will rather ripen in another world, than be dissolved like that of merely carnal relationship; we need not be afraid of having too much of it. How kindly affectionate we ought to be to one another! we are to live together in heaven, never let us quarrel on earth. I read a story the other day of an elder of a Scotch

kirk, who at the elders' meeting had angrily disputed with his minister, until he almost broke his heart. The night after he had a dream which so impressed him, that his wife said to him in the morning, "Ye look very sad, Jan; what is the matter wi' ye?" "And well I am," said he, for I have dreamed that I had hard words with our minister, and he went home and died, and soon after I died too; and I dreamed that I went up to heaven, and when I got to the gate, out came the minister, and put out his hands to welcome me, saying, "Come along, Jan, there's nae strife up here, I'm so glad to see ye." So the elder went down to the minister's house to beg his pardon, and found in very truth that he was dead. He was so smitten by the blow, that within two weeks he followed his pastor to the skies; and I should not wonder but what his minister did meet him, and say, "Come along, Jan, there's nae strife up here." Brethren, why should there be strife below? Let us love each other, and by the fact that we are coheirs of that blessed inheritance, let us dwell together as partakers of a common life, and soon to be partakers of a common heaven.

Brethren, I think I may add, a door has often been opened in heaven to us at the communion-table. Astronomers select the best spots for observatories; they like elevated places which are free from traffic, so that their instruments may not quiver with the rumbling of wheels; they prefer also to be away from the smoke of manufacturing towns, that they may discern the orbs of heaven more clearly. Surely, if any one place is fitter to be an observatory for a heaven-mind than another, it is the table of communion.

*"I have been there, and still will go,
'Tis like a little heaven below."*

Christ may hide himself from his people in preaching, as he

did from his disciples on the road to Emmaus, but he made himself known unto them in breaking of bread. Prize much the solemn breaking of bread. That ordinance has been perverted, it has been travestied and profaned; and hence some tender Christians scarcely value it at its right account. To those who will use it rightly, examining themselves, and so coming to that table, it is, indeed, a divine observatory—a place of calm retirement from the world. The elements of bread and wine become the lenses of a far-seeing optic-glass, through which we behold the Saviour; and I say again, if there be one spot of earth clear from the smoke of care, it is the table where saints have fellowship with their Lord. A door is often opened in heaven at this banquet, when his banner over us is love; but if it be so sweet to enjoy the emblem, what must it be to live with Christ himself, and drink the wine new with him in the kingdom of our Father!

Another door that is opened in heaven is the delights of knowledge. It is a charming thing to know of earthly science, but it is more delightful far to know spiritual truth. The philosopher rejoices as he tracks some recondite law of nature to its source, and discovers callow principles of matter as they nestle beneath a long hidden mystery; but to hunt out a gospel truth, to track the real meaning of a text of Scripture, to get some fresh light upon one of the offices of the Redeemer, to see a precious type stand out with a fresh meaning, to get to know him and the power of his resurrection experimentally, to have the truth engraven upon the soul as though by the linger of God; oh! this is happiness. It is certainly one of the greatest delights of the Christian to sit at the feet of Jesus with Mary, and learn of him, to be educated in the college of Corpus Christi, and to find the schola crucis to be schola lucis, because of the light which streams from the cross. But, brethren, if the little knowledge we gain here be so sweet, what will our knowledge be when the intellect shall be expanded, when the mental

eye shall be clarified, and when truth shall be perceived not through a veil of mist and cloud, but in full meridian light. If the dawn be bright, what will the midday be? If to-day our little travels in the domains of revelation have so enriched us, how rich shall we be when, like Columbus, we spread the sail for the unknown land, traversing seas of knowledge unnavigated before? What will it be, beloved, to make discoveries of the glory of Christ, and then to make known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, the manifold wisdom of God in the person of the Wellbeloved? There is a door opened in heaven to every thoughtful, studious reader of the word, and to every experienced Christian. If you are learning of Christ, the joy of knowledge gives you some idea of heaven.

Another door of heaven may be found in the sweets of victory. I mean not the world's victory, where there are garments rolled in blood, and wringing of hands, and wounds and death, but I refer to victory over sin, self, and Satan. How grand a thing to get a passion down and hold it by the throat, strangling it despite its struggles! It is fine work to hang up some old sin as an accursed thing before the Lord, just as they hung up the Canaanitish kings before the face of the sun; or if you cannot quite kill the lust, it is honourable work to roll a great stone at the cave's mouth, and shut in the wretches till the evening comes, when they shall meet their doom. It is a joyous thing when by God's grace under temptation you are kept from falling as you did on a former occasion, and so are made conquerors over a weakness which was your curse in past years. It is a noble thing to be made strong through the blood of the Lamb so as to overcome sin. The delights of holiness are as deep as they are pure. To be acquiring by divine grace spiritual strength, is no mean blessing. But what will it be to be in heaven, when every sin shall be conquered, when Satan himself shall be under our feet? Ah, if I once have him under

my foot, how will I exult and rejoice over that old dragon who has tormented the saints of God these many years! Let us once but see sin and hell led captives, how will we sing hosanna to the Lord mighty in battle, and how will we exult and rejoice as we participate in his victory! It is coming; the victory is surely coming. We shall stand upon the mountain's brow with him and chant the lay of victory. At the battle of Dunbar, when Cromwell and his men fought up hill, and step by step achieved the victory, their watchword was the Lord of hosts, and they marched to the battle singing—

*“O Lord our God, arise, and let
Mine enemies scattered be,
And let all them that do thee hate
Before thy presence flee.”*

When they had won the day, the grand old leader, saint and soldier in one, bade his men halt and sing with him; and there they poured forth a psalm with such lusty music, that the old German Ocean might well have clapped its hands in chorus, “Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously.” But what a song will that be when we, the followers of Christ, having long fought up hill, wrestling against sin, shall at last see death and hell overcome, and with our Leader standing in our midst, shall raise the last great hallelujah to God and the Lamb, which hallelujah shall roll on for ever and ever. God grant us each to be there! Each little victory here helps us to see as through a door to the grand ultimate triumph, which may God hasten in his own time.

III. I might thus have continued, but time fails altogether; and therefore I must only add two or three sentences concerning THE DOOR OF ENTRANCE.

A door will soon be opened in heaven for each one of us

who have believed in Christ Jesus. Christian, the message will soon come to thee, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee." Ready-to-Halt, the post will come to town for thee with the token, "The golden bowl is broken, and the silver cord is loosed." Father Honest must find it true that the daughters of music shall be brought low, and Valiant-for-Truth must learn that the pitcher is broken at the fountain. Gird up, then, your loins for the last time, and go down to the river with courage. It flows, as some say, cold and icy as death at the foot of the celestial hill; remember, however, it will be deeper or shallower to you according to your faith, and if your faith can keep from staggering, you shall pass through that stream dryshod, and in the river's midst you shall sing the loudest song of all your life. You shall then be nearer to heaven, and heaven shall flood your spirit and drown out death. Soon, I say, that door will open ; surely you do not want to postpone the day. What is there amiss between you and your Husband that you wish to tarry away from him? What, do you love to be an exile from your own country? Do you love to be banished from the "city that hath foundations," of which you are a citizen? Surely, if your spirit be as it should be, you will say—

*"Like a bairn to its mithier, a wee birdie to its
 nest,
 I would fain be ganging home to my Saviour's
 breast;
 For he gathers in his bosom witless, worthless
 lambs like me,
 And he carries them himself to his ain
 countrie."*

Beloved, never try to forget your departure. Thoughts of mortality are incessant with me. But, alas! sometimes they are

painful, and I chide myself that it ever should be painful to think of being where Jesus is. No, no, it is not that; it is that naughty doubt and fear that flits across my soul and darkens it; for it must be bliss to be with Jesus, and therefore it must be a secondary bliss to think of being where he is. It is greatly wise to talk with our last hours. It is well often to perform in meditation a rehearsal of the coronation scene, when the crown shall be on our head, and the palm in our baud, anticipate, I pray you, the glory which is surely yours if you are in Christ. But O make sure that you are in Christ. Get two grips of him! O hold him by a strong, but humble, confidence! Fling away all other hopes, they are vanity. Bind yourself to his dear cross, the one plank on which you can swim to glory. Never mariner was drowned on that: —

*“None but Jesus, none but Jesus,
Can do helpless sinners good.”*

God bless you for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

TWENTY-FOUR THE HEAVENLY RAINBOW

SERMON #3412
PUBLISHED IN 1914.

*“And there was a rainbow around about the
Throne, in sight like unto an emerald.”*

REVELATION 4:3

“A RAINBOW!” “A rainbow around about the Throne!” I have a notion concerning this rainbow, that it was a complete circle. In the 10th Chapter the Apostle tells us that he saw “another mighty angel with a rainbow upon his head,” which could hardly have been the semi-circular arc we are accustomed to see in the sky in times of rain and sunshine. It must have been, I should imagine, a complete ring.

I stood, two years ago, on a little wooden bridge in the village of Handeck on the Swiss side of the Grimsel Pass, and looked down upon the roaring torrent beneath. The waterfall, breaking itself upon enormous rocks, cast up showers of foam

and spray. As I looked down, the sun shone upon it and I saw a rainbow such as I had never seen but once before in another place upon a similar occasion. It was a complete circle around the fall, then another one and within it a third—three wheels within wheels, consisting of all the delightful colors of the rainbow, from the timid violet up to the courageous red! There was no mistake about it. They were complete rings that seemed to go right round the torrent, like great belts of sapphires, emeralds and chalcedonies. The ring was trebled as it shone before me. I stood and wondered at the sight. Then these very texts came to my mind, “a rainbow around about the Throne,” and, “I saw a mighty angel, who had a rainbow upon his head.”

It seems to me that John had such a sight before him—a rainbow which entirely surrounded the Throne of God. If it is so, I shall not, I think, be accounted fanciful if I draw a moral. In this world we only see, for it is all we can see, one half of the Eternal Covenant of God’s Grace. That one upward arch of Divine masonry is all that we see here. The other downward half, on which the one which we see rests, namely, the eternal decree, the purpose, the resolve of Infinite Sovereignty—that is out of sight as yet. We cannot discern it. Earth comes between the horizon and bounds it. But when we shall get up yonder and see things as they are, and know even as we are known, then the Covenant will be seen by us to be a complete circle, an harmonious whole—not a broken thing, not a broken arc, or a semi-circle, as it seems to be now—but, like Deity itself, perpetual, everlasting, complete, perfect, eternal! It may be true to the figure—it certainly will be so in fact. What we know not now, we shall know hereafter and possibly this very emblem is here used to set forth to us that while we see the Glory which God has made manifest, we do not and cannot, at present, see the eternal purpose itself, except as far as we judge of it from its grand results. Oh, it is delightful to think of going up yonder if

for nothing else than knowing more of Christ, understanding more of Divine Love, drinking deeper into the mystery of godliness through which God was manifest in the flesh! Surely, if we know but little, that little knowledge has set us thirsting for deeper draughts and we are waiting for the time when we shall drop the veil which parts us from spiritual realities and shall see them face to face, needing no longer to view them as in a glass, reflected darkly!

I want you to notice three things which these words suggest, "There was a rainbow around about the Throne." First—Divine Sovereignty never oversteps the bounds of the Covenant, but is rainbow-hedged with a wall of fire around about the Throne. Divine Government springing from Sovereignty—the Throne of God is always regulated by the Covenant—there is respect at all times to the Covenant of Grace in everything that Jehovah does. Thirdly—in the Covenant of Grace the predominant quality is Grace—"it was in sight like unto an emerald," which I will further explain indicates that loving kindness and tender mercy towards men always shine radiant in the Covenant. First, then, "there was a rainbow around about the Throne."

1. DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY NEVER OVERSTEPS THE BOUNDS OF THE COVENANT.

"There was a rainbow around about the Throne"—as though the rainbow hedged the Throne of God—belted it, girt it round about. God's Sovereignty must, of necessity, be absolute and unlimited. He made everything and as nothing existed before God, or independent of God, He had a right to make what He pleased and to make all that He did make after His own will and pleasure. And when He has made, His rights do not terminate, but He still continues to have an altogether unlimited and

absolute power over the creatures of His hands. He claims the right for Himself. "Has not the potter power over the clay to make of the same lump one vessel to honor, and another to dishonor?" God has the power to create and the power, afterwards, to use that which is created for the purpose for which He has made it. "Shall I not do what I will with My own?" is a question which the Almighty may well ask of all His creatures who would dare to bring Him to their bar and blasphemously rejudge His judgment, snatch from His hands the balance and the rod and seek to set themselves up as censors of the Holy One! Whenever men say, "How can God do this?" and, "How shall He do that?" it should always content us to answer, "No, O man, but who are you that replies against God?" for whether we will have it or not, still God has said it and He will stand to it. "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion"—so then, it is not of him that wills nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy!

But as one Truth of God is always to be taken in its relation to another Truth and not to be isolated from its natural kindred, it is a delightful consideration that God, in His absolute Sovereignty, never does violence to any of His other attributes and, above all, never does violence to the Covenant. The Covenant still surrounds the Sovereignty and practically hedges it within its bounds!

God is practically, as far as we are concerned, bound by His own Revelation of His own Character. He has been pleased to tell us that He is just and that He is the Lord God, merciful and gracious. In a few words, He has given us the sum of Himself by saying that, "God is Love." When a man says concerning himself, "I have a right to do as I like, but I am generous as well as just," you feel sure he will exercise the right which he claims in a manner according to and consistent with his own statement

of what he is. And if he has rightly estimated his own character, he will give bountifully and pay honorably. Rest assured, then, that God's Sovereignty never will prove Him to have misrepresented Himself, or to have deceived us! When He says that He is just, He neither can nor will act unjustly towards any creature He has made. There was never a pang or a pain inflicted arbitrarily by God. God never pronounced a curse upon any man unless that man had clearly and richly earned it by his sin! No soul was ever cast into Hell by God's Sovereignty. God takes counsel with Himself, but He stoops not to caprice. How comes the hapless creature, then, to this dread torment? Sin brings the sinner into a ruined state—justice pronounces the sinner's doom. Sovereignty may let that doom stand. What if it moves not to avert the issue? Justice it is that pronounces the curse. Be assured, Man, however much you may kick against the Doctrine of Election, you have no reason to do so! Whatever that Doctrine may involve, it is not possible but that God must and will act towards you in a way so strictly just that when you, yourself, come to discover it in eternity, you will not be able to complain, but be compelled to stand speechless!

Moreover, God has been pleased to assure you that He is Love—that He is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plentiful in mercy. Now, whatever Sovereignty may decree, you may rest assured that the decree will be in consonance with the fact that God is full of mercy, grace and truth. I know some of you set up the decree of God like a huge monster before you. You paint a horrible picture, as though the visage of Him that speaks to you from Heaven were cruel and pitiless. But that picture is drawn by your perverse imagination—it is not God's portrait of Himself, for He says, "As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but had rather that he would turn unto Me and live." God mocks not when He says, "Turn you, turn you; why will you die, O house of Israel?"

That is honest emotion which God feels over a sinner who ruins himself when He cries, "How can I give you up? How shall I set you as Admah? How shall I make you as Zeboim? My heart is moved; My repentings are kindled together!" God wills not the death of a sinner, but had rather that he should turn unto Him and live! So He, Himself, assures us and, Sovereign as He is, yet He still remains both just and gracious forever—and let us not doubt it for a moment! The rainbow, the rainbow of His own glorious attributes of mercy always surrounds the Throne of God!

It is equally certain, taking another view of this subject, that God's Sovereignty never can by any possibility run counter to the promise which He Himself has made. God has a right to do as He wills with His own, but when He once, in His Sovereignty, chooses to make a promise, He would be unfaithful if He did not keep it—and it is not possible that He can be unfaithful, for none of His Words ever did fail, or ever shall! He has been true to the very jots and tittles of all that He has, Himself, declared. Never in any case has any man been able to say that God has spoken in secret, and said to the seed of Jacob, "Seek you My face," in vain. I want every unconverted person here to be careful to note this Truth of God. Whenever you find a promise in God's Word, do not let the thought of Predestination scare you from it. Predestination can never be contrary to the promise! It is not in Election, or Reprobation, or in any Doctrine that asserts Divine Sovereignty to make the promise of God to be of no effect! Take a promise like this—"He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved." If you believe, and if you are baptized, you have, then, God's Word for it—you shall be saved! Be sure of it—that stands fast! Heaven and earth may pass away, but that Word shall not fail you. God will keep His Word of Truth with you and at the Last Tremendous Day you shall find that since you believe, God will save you!

Take another—"Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Then, if you call upon the name of the Lord—that is if with hearty, earnest prayer, you cry to God and if with your whole soul you take Him to be your All-inAll, calling upon His name as the heathens do upon their gods when they avow themselves to be their followers—if you do this, you shall be saved! Now, I beseech you, remember that no decree can possibly run counter to this. You say, "What if the decree shall destroy me?" Man, His promise is the decree! The promise of God is His eternal purpose, written out in black and white for you to read. So far from the counsel of eternity being contrary to the Revelation in time, the revelation in time is nothing more than a transcript of what God resolved to do from before the foundation of the world! Take any promise you will. Let it be this, if the others seem to miss you—"Come now, let us reason together; though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool." Now, your sins are willing to come and reason with God and you find that when He reasons with you, He tells you that you must rest in the blood of Jesus, leave your sins and depend wholly upon Christ. Well, now, after you have done, you have God's Word for it that those scarlet sins of yours shall be "whiter than snow." Well then, they must be so! It is not possible that anything unknown to you should come in and make void the promise which is known. I will read that verse I just mentioned again, "He has never spoken in secret, and said to the seed of Jacob, Seek you My face in vain." God has not said behind your back what He has not said to your face! He has said, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." He has said, "Oh, you thirsty, come and drink." He has said, "Whoever will, let him come and take of the Water of Life freely." There is nothing in that mysterious roll, which no human eye has ever seen, that can be in conflict with the golden promises which gleam in the Book of God's Word upon every needy sinner that

comes and trusts in the Lord! There is a rainbow around about the Throne. Sovereignty never gets out of the circle of the promise.

Oh, child of God! Your heavenly Father, in His Sovereignty, has a right to do with you, His child, as He pleases, but He will never let that Sovereignty get out of the limit of the Covenant! As a Sovereign, He might cast you away, but He has promised that He never will—and He never will! As a Sovereign, He might leave you to perish, but He has said, “I will not leave you nor forsake you.” As a Sovereign, He might suffer you to be tempted beyond your strength, but He has promised that no temptation shall happen to you, but such as is common to man, and He will, with the temptation, make a way of escape! Let no dark thought ever cross your mind that, perhaps, towards you He will deal arbitrarily. It is not so. He will carry out His purpose to you—and of that purpose He has already informed you by telling you that you are His, His adopted child and you shall be His forever and ever! In the second place—

II. THE RULING GOVERNMENT OF GOD IN THE WORLD ALWAYS HAS RESPECT TO THE COVENANT OF GRACE.

It is so in great things. He set the bounds of the nations according to the number of the children of Israel. When you read God’s Word, Egypt comes upon the stage—Assyria, Babylon, Greece and Rome. Yet what are they but a sort of background? They come and they go, for all their secular grandeur, as mere accessories. The central figure is always the Election of Grace—the people of God—for the rest, they are merely the plowmen and the vinedressers for the Lord’s own people. Sometimes these nations are nursing fathers. At other times they are sharp rods. Whichever they may be, they are mere

instruments. The Bible speaks of them as so much scaffolding for the building of the living temple in which the mercy of God shall be displayed! Whenever you read, or hear people talk about prophecy, you may depend upon it that Inspiration has not been given to tell of Louis Napoleon, or any other earthly Sovereign. It is not the history of Prussia, Russia, or France that the heavenly Apocalypse unveils. The whole Book is written for His people—it gives us the history of the Church—but it does not give us the history of anything else! The way to read the Book, if you do read it, is with this central thought in your minds—that God has not revealed to us anything concerning Assyria, Babylon, Greece, or Rome for their own sakes—but He has referred to them because they happen to have a connection with the history of His Church. That is all, for He has chosen Jacob to Himself and Israel to be His peculiar treasure. My Brothers and Sisters, I believe that when kings and potentates meet in the cabinet chamber and consult together according to their ambition, a Counselor whom they never see pulls the strings and they are only His puppets. And even when armies meet in battle array, when the world seems shaken to and fro with revolutions and the most stable thrones quiver as though they were but vessels out at sea, there is a secret Force working in all. The end and drift of these momentous actions is the bringing out of the chosen race—the salvation of the blood-bought company and the glory of God in the redeeming of the world unto Himself! When you read the newspaper, read it to see how your heavenly Father is managing the world for the good of His own children! All else—be it the disposal of a throne, the settlement of a political question, or the winning of a boat race—all else, I say, are minor things compared with the interests of the Election of Grace! All things are revolving and cooperating for good. They are working together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to the purpose

of His Grace. By them He will make manifest throughout the ages unto the angels and the principalities, His manifold wisdom!

Now, as this is the case in the great, it is equally so in the little. In all your smaller affairs, God always governs with respect to the Covenant. Your worst afflictions are still meant for your good, for this is one clause in the Covenant, "Surely in blessing, I will bless." When you come to the worst, even should that happen to be at the close of life, you will find that God has still kept within Covenant engagements. Hear what David said upon his bed of pain, "Although my house is not so with God, yet"—oh, gracious, "yet"!—"yet has He made with me an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure." You have lost your property—it is a sad thing for you to come down in the world, but this always was in the Covenant. Have you never read it? "In the world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." Lately, when you have been in prayer, you have had but little comfort—and when you have read the Word of God, it has not seemed to gleam with delight to you, but rather the Book has seemed dark. Well, well, that is in the Covenant! Did I not read it to you? "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous, therefore, and repent." Perhaps you have been backsliding. It is sad that it should be so. And now you have lost much of your enjoyment and you are exceedingly cast down. But did you ever read it, "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways"? Do you not know it to be a promise from God—"If his children err from My commandments, then will I visit their transgressions with the rod; nevertheless, My Covenant will I not take away from him, nor suffer My loving kindness to fail"? You are only receiving, now, what God has promised to give to you!

Look upon these things as tokens that God is faithful. We are told in the Covenant God made with Noah, that "seedtime

and harvest, summer and winter shall never cease." Now, the snow has fallen today, and it is bitterly cold. But, my Brothers and Sisters, it was in the Covenant that the winter should not cease. No doubt when the harvest comes, and the summer laughs with joy, we shall say, "How good God is and how true He has been to His Covenant, that there should be a harvest and a summer!" Ah, but when the seed is cast into the cold soil and the frost covers it, you ought to be equally grateful to the faithfulness of God, for this, too, is one part of the promise! If He did not keep one part, you might be afraid that He would not keep the other! Just so is it spiritually. Your troubles are promised to you. "In the world you shall have tribulation." You have got your troubles. "As many as He loves, He chastens." You have got the chastening. Be, therefore, thankful that you have another proof of the Divine Faithfulness towards you. There is a rainbow around about the Throne of God, and let the Throne decree what it may! The scepter is never stretched beyond the boundary of Covenant Love. It is impossible for God to deal towards His people contrary to the spirit which breathes in the two Immutable things in which it is impossible for Him to lie, and by which He has given strong consolation to those who have fled for refuge to the hope which is set before them in the Gospel. Our third point is—

III. IN THE COVENANT OF GRACE, REPRESENTED BY THE CIRCULAR RAINBOW, LOVE AND GRACE ARE ALWAYS CONSPICUOUS.

The emerald, with its green color, is always taken to represent this green earth and the things which concern the dwellers therein. And it has always been viewed as a type of mercy. It is a soft and gentle color, the most agreeable to the eyes of all the colors, the vibrations of light caused by it being found to be

more suitable to the optic nerve than the vibrations of any other color. Scarlet and such bright colors, the emblems of justice and vengeance, would soon destroy the eyes. White, the emblem of purity, cannot long be endured. Those of us who have crossed lofty mountains covered with snow have had to suffer as long as we have been there, from snow-blindness. The human eyes would soon cease to perform its functions if the earth were long covered with snow and if we had nothing to relieve the eyes. Green is the color that suits mankind and it represents the mercy, the tenderness and the benevolence of God towards mankind.

Whenever you read the Covenant, read it in the light of the emerald. I have sometimes thought that some of my Brothers and Sisters read it in another light. I think I have heard prayers which, if translated into plain English, would run something like this—"Lord, we thank You that we are elected. We bless You that we are in the Covenant. We bless Your name that You are sending sinners down to Hell, cutting them off and destroying them, but we are saved!" I have sometimes thought I have caught in such prayers an air of complacency in the damnation of sinners, and even a little more than that—I have fancied I have seen in certain hyper-Calvinists a sort of Red Indian scalping knife propensity—an ogre-like feeling with respect to reprobation—a smacking of lips over the ruin and destruction of mankind! As to all of which, I can only say that it seems to me to be "earthly, sensual, devilish." I cannot imagine a man, especially a man who has the spirit of Christ in him, thinking of the ruin of mankind with any other feeling than that which moved the soul of Christ when He wept over Jerusalem, crying, "How often would I have gathered you as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings!" Let no one imagine that the spirit of Calvinism is a spirit of hostility to universal humanity! It is not so! It is a perversion and a caricature of the

expositions of Calvin and Augustine—and of the Apostle Paul and of what our Master preached—to represent us as thinking with complacency of the ruin of any one of the human race!

My Brothers and Sisters, when I have sometimes heard statements made about the fewness of those who will be saved at the last, I have thought that surely the rainbow around about the Throne of the God whom such people worshipped must have been scarlet in color. It could not have been “in sight like unto an emerald.” There must have been a predominance of vengeance in it and not of mercy! Why, I firmly believe that at the last it will be found that there are more in Heaven than in Hell, for when the great winding up of the drama shall come, Christ will in all things have the preeminence! Now, alas, there are few that find the narrow road while broad is the gate of Hell and many there are that go in that way. We are in the minority, now, but when I think of the countless hosts of little children, elect of God, who have gone from their mother’s breasts to Glory, not having passed through actual sin, but being bought with precious blood, I can see a vast multitude that belongs to Christ! And when I look forward to that brighter age when the nations shall flock to the feet of Christ, and tens of thousands and hundreds of millions shall sing His praises from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, I rejoice to think that then the Lord Jesus Christ will see of the travail of His soul and will be satisfied—and it is not a little that will satisfy Him! I have sometimes thought with a certain good Divine, that when the King comes to end His reign, there will be found no more in prison in comparison with the great number of His creatures, than in any well ordered government. At any rate, let us hope so. We have no right to speak positively where we have no positive declaration. But it is significant that there is always a prominence given in Scripture to the grace, the mercy, the goodness and the loving kindness of God. Surely Scripture

would not tell us this unless it would also seem to be so in the universal Providence of God. I believe that in the rainbow, the emerald will be the most conspicuous, and that Divine Grace will be “in Heaven the topmost stone,” for it “well deserves the praise.” And now, in conclusion, my dear Friends—

IV. LET ME MAKE ONE OR TWO PRACTICAL REMARKS.

Let me exhort you all to understand the Covenant, of which the rainbow is the symbol. I am sorry to say that there are many professors who do not know what the Covenant means. I have been told that there are pulpits where the word, “Covenant,” is scarcely ever mentioned, so that the congregation really do not know what the Covenant of Grace means. Now, the old Scotch Divines and our own Puritan forefathers were of opinion that the two Covenants are the very essence of all theology. When a man gets a clear view of the Covenant of Works and sees how it was made with Adam, and broken, and how it involved our ruin—and then gets a clear view of the Covenant of Grace made with the Second Adam, the conditions of which are all fulfilled by Him, so that the Covenant cannot be broken by us—and that all the provisions of that Covenant are made sure by His having fulfilled His Suretyship and Sponsorship on our behalf. When a man gets a hold of these two things, why, he cannot be an Arminian. It is impossible! But he must keep pretty near to those grand old Doctrines which we call the Doctrines of Grace. If any man says to me, “What is the one thing which I have to learn to be a sound preacher of the Gospel?” I think I would say, “Learn to distinguish between the Covenant of Hagar, which is Sinai in Arabia, and the Covenant of Sarah, which is the Covenant of the New Jerusalem, which is of promise. The distinction between works and Grace, between debt and gift, between the works of the Law and the abounding

loving kindness of the Lord our Lord.” May I ask young members of the Church to read the Scriptures upon this point and to ask their older friends to instruct them in the matter of the Covenant? It is such an important point that I would press it very earnestly. I hope you do not wish to go to Heaven like those of whom the Savior speaks, and who enter into life lame, or maimed, or having but one eye. Oh, no, but seek to clear away ignorance! That the soul is without knowledge is not good. Get a clear view of these things, for by so doing you will be comforted, you will be strengthened, you will be sanctified!

But if you do understand the Covenant, have a constant regard to it. There is a sweet prayer, “Have respect unto Your Covenant.” We pray that to God. Well, He does have respect to the Covenant. He has the symbol of it all around His Throne! He cannot look anywhere without looking through His Covenant. He sees us, He sees the world, He sees all things through that rainbow which is around His Throne. He sees all human affairs through the medium of the great Mediator, the Covenant Angel, the Lord Jesus. Well now, what you ask God to do, and what He does, do for yourselves! Have respect unto the Covenant. Do you ever think of the Covenant? Some, I am afraid, do not think of it by the month together and yet the Covenant—oh, Brothers and Sisters—it is a casket full of wealth! It is a fountain full of crystal streams! It is the Heaven out of which the manna falls! It is the Rock out of which the living waters flow—the Rock, Christ, who is the essence of the Covenant to us! Live upon the Covenant in life and let it claim your last accents in the moment of death! Rejoice in this Covenant of Grace all day! Live upon the choice morsels which God has laid up in store for you in it. The Covenant! The Covenant! Oh, keep your hearts, keep your thoughts, keep your eyes constantly on it!

And oh, get comfort from the Covenant of it, but really lay

hold upon it. You are in covenant with God! It is not a question with you, as a believer in Christ, whether God may keep you and bless you and cause His face to shine upon you. He will do so! He cannot do otherwise, if I may use such language concerning Him, because though He is free, yet He has bound Himself by His promise! He has bound Himself by His oath! He has put Himself within the limit of the rainbow and out of that He cannot, and will not go! It encircles His Throne and Himself. You may go up to His Throne humbly but still go there with boldness. You do not come like a common beggar. You do not knock at the door as a man does at your door, a chance beggar asking for charity. You have got a promise! Come, then, as a man goes into the bank who has got a bank-bill that is dated and now the day is come for it to be paid! Go to God, making mention of the name of Jesus, with the humble boldness with which a child asks of its own loving parent what that parent has often promised to bestow. Let the comfort of the Covenant be continually yours!

And if you have this comfort,

never, never be so base as to indulge hard thoughts of God. It is very easy for me to say

this to you, but it will not always be so easy for you to practice it. Ah, Friends, we think we can take God's will and be submissive to it and acquiesce in it—but when it presses hard upon us—then is the proof. When a man gets into the fining-pot and the crucible is put into the fire, they will show what faith he has! Ah, it is hard when you get a heavy stroke, when you are told that such-and-such an one who is very dear to you will die before long, or when you know that you, yourself, have a fatal disease—it is then hard to say, “The Lord lives, and blessed be my Rock!” Or, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away, and blessed be His name.” It was admirable in David, that when he began one of his mournful Psalms, he knew that

he was going to groan a good deal, so he said, "There is one matter we will set right before we get out of trim. Truly God is good to Israel." That is settled. He puts that down as the first thing when he gets into the box as a witness. He says, "I am confused, today, and tumbled up and down in my wits, but before I say anything, I have to say this one thing—I solemnly declare before men, angels and devils—God is truly good to Israel! As for me, my feet had well-nigh gone, my steps had almost slipped," and so on—but he begins with that. Now, settle that, settle that in your soul! Put that down like an anchor, right deep in the sea—come winds, come waves, come hurricanes—God is good! God is faithful! God will keep His Covenant! Every dark and painful line meets in the center of His Love. It must be right. Never let your soul be envious of the wicked when you see their prosperity, but still rejoice in your God and let Him do as He wills!

If you do know anything about the sweetness of the Covenant, when you meet with a poor child of the house of Israel, tell him about it. And as you do not know who he may be, tell everybody about it! There may be one of your Brothers or Sisters with whom you are to live in Heaven sitting next to you in the pew. Since I mentioned last Sunday night that there was a young person who had been here for two years and nobody had ever spoken to her, I have had a letter from a young man to say that he is in the same case. Oh, dear! You know how I told you on Sunday night that I was ashamed of some of you, but I did not know in which part of the chapel you were and, therefore, as I did not know who it was, I could not be ashamed of you, but get you to be ashamed on your own account! Now, you see, there are two cases, and I am afraid if we get more testimony, it would go to ever so many places in the Tabernacle. Do not let it be so! Let each one pluck up heart and say unto his fellow, "Know the Lord." Let each man say to his neighbor,

“Have you tasted the sweetness?” Who finds honey and eats it all? You ought to say, like the Syrian lepers, “This is a day of good tidings; if we tarry here, perhaps mischief will befall us; let us go even into the camp of Israel and let us tell them of this thing.” Spread abroad the good news! Who knows how many you may bring to my Master’s footstool, to their salvation and to your own comfort and joy?

TWENTY-FIVE
ROYAL HOMAGE

SERMON GIVEN ON OCTOBER 20, 2017

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 4:10

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 19

“And cast their crowns before the throne.”

REVELATION 4:10.

THERE are a great many things we should like to know about heaven. Our curiosity has been excited full often to ask a vast number of questions, but after being excited, it has never been gratified, for God's word has told us little about the details of that happy realm. I suppose the Lord thought it better to leave the future shrouded in mystery that we might think more of the common every-day duties of the life that now is. Hence the revelation he has made directs our faith to himself and to his dear Son, and does not distract our attention with descriptions of scene and circumstance into which our imagination would

fondly rise. He has thus saved up the details about the next world until we get there, to make surprises of them, so that heaven might be all the brighter because it so infinitely exceeds anything that we had conceived. We are not told, for instance, where heaven is. There have been very learned conjectures about certain stars and constellations, which are supposed to be the centre of all the celestial system, and therefore may be the centre of the universe; and, therefore, the place where the throne of God is absolutely located, and the presence of God peculiarly revealed. When all is said, it is only “it may be,” and it is just as unlikely as it is likely. I regard such speculations as star-gazing to be idle and unseemly, impertinent and unprofitable— a pure waste of time, and perhaps worse. We are not told anything even about the social communion of heaven. We do know, or at least, we think we have abundant reason for believing, that saints know each other, that they are not like men in a great mass, indistinct and undistinguishable, but that there is fellowship among the saints, that Abraham is Abraham, and Isaac is Isaac, and Jacob is Jacob, and the redeemed ones from among men sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as such, in the kingdom of God. The New Jerusalem is said to have its streets, and streets imply intercourse, but there is little said about that — just an outline, as it were, such as an artist might make with charcoal — none of the filling up and the bright colours. We are told little of the food of heaven, or whether there is any — whether the bodies need aliment to feed on for their nourishment, and nectral draughts for their refreshment; albeit, when the manna once dropped from heaven men did eat angels’ food. And we are told little of the celebrations of heaven, whether the worship will be uniform, or whether there will be certain days joyous above the rest, high days, feasts and festivals, jubilees, and glorious times of the

unveiling of God's presence in sevenfold splendour, when the harps shall pour forth more melodious tunes! Of all these things we should like to have known something, but our heads cannot hold much. One thing would have pushed out another. Passages like this we could not spare — "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." Concerning such a sentence I will venture to say every single syllable in the verse is worth more than whole volumes about heaven might have been, though the Spirit of God might have inspired them — worth more for present and practical purpose to us who are yet among the sons of men. Are there any dear brethren who understand the Book of Revelation, the Book of Ezekiel, and the Book of Daniel? I am pleased to hear it. But if the Lord will help me to understand Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, I shall be perfectly satisfied to go on preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, for I think I shall get up to them by-and-by in their knowledge of prophecy and mystery, when I come into clearer light and see the Master face to face. Meanwhile, there are sinners to be saved. We must go about doing this soul-saving business in his name, with the simple means put before us in the gospels and epistles, which we are enabled to understand by the Spirit of God through our own personal experience of the truth revealed.

Now, to-night, let us take a glimpse, just a glimpse, within the veil, such as our text affords us. We find the twenty-four elders (who, without straining the passage, we might conceive to be, and who doubtless are, the representatives of the church), sitting on their thrones before the august Majesty of God, with crowns upon their heads; and they are represented as casting those crowns before the throne of God.

From this sublime picture I gather two things: — first, that these representative men, representatives ' of the church of

God, will all be crowned — they are crowned heads; and secondly, that they all cast their crowns before the throne. When we have talked of these things, we will gather a few lessons of practical moment for this present life.

I. Brethren, THE SAINTS IN HEAVEN ARE ALL CROWNED. I say, “all,” for these represent the whole. The four-and-twenty elders are represented as saying, “Thou hast redeemed us out of every people, and language, and nation,” so that they represent all. It may be that there are degrees in glory. It may be that there are none. I do not attempt to solve the question. But if there are, yet there is no degree below a crowned head in heaven. All the saints have their crowns. — “A crown of life that fadeth not away” is the very lowest portion of the very least saint who is admitted into glory.

Now, how is it they come to be crowned? Our answer will be six-fold.

They are all kings *Dei Gratia*. You know how our monarchs like to put it on their coins, “*Dei Gratia*” — “by the grace of God,” though I don’t know with what propriety; for on the whole about as graceless a lot of individuals as are to be found anywhere are kings and emperors and all hereditary rulers. If one were to take promiscuously half-a-dozen kings and half-a-dozen paupers, I think in respect to moral character the paupers would probably not have the most cause to blush. And I am sure there is a larger percentage of the poor on earth than of the richest among men who are heirs of the kingdom of heaven. But what they take for themselves as being by the grace of God, everyone in heaven may say of himself truly. They are all kings by the grace of God. Ah! ask them and they will tell you it was the sovereign will of God alone that set them apart; it was the Lord, their heavenly Father, who chose them from among the sons of men that they should be his sons and daughters; and it was the grace of God which first led them to know

anything about reigning with Christ. Grace came and enlightened their understanding; grace influenced their wills; grace changed their affections; grace made them to be heirs of heaven, and they will tell you it was grace that kept them where grace brought them; that they did not merely begin in the spirit to be afterwards made perfect in the flesh, but that as grace was Alpha, it was Omega. The Spirit of God which wrought in them mightily, made them diligent in every good word and work, and willing to be and to do according to God's good pleasure. And every crowned head there will tell you that the very last act of faith before he entered into fruition, was as much based upon grace and as much the fruit of grace as was the first act of believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is not a king in heaven that has his crown on any other terms than this, "by the sovereign grace of God."

But, though it may seem astonishing, in the second place they are all kings by hereditary descent. "How?" say you, "They were born in sin and shapen in iniquity; they are of the fallen Adam, heirs of eternal misery." Quite so, but they have been born again, and it is in their new nature that they are before the throne of God. They have been "begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." "Beloved, know ye not that they are the sons of God," and though "it doth not yet appear what they shall be," yet are they truly God's sons, and, therefore, when Christ shall appear they also will appear with him in glory. There are none in heaven but God's sons. The angels, it is true, are there, and they are his ministering servants; but there are none of the human race there that are merely servants. They are all sons. Some were prodigal sons, and some at times had got into the bad temper of the elder brother in the parable; but they are all sons, and they are there because they are sons. They have come to their crown by inheritance, as much as any Prince of Wales ever succeeded

in this country to his crown. There is born in the image of God's Son a new and peculiar race with heaven entailed upon them, an entail which hell can never spoil. They are kings, then, by hereditary descent.

But, thirdly, they are kings by another right. They are kings by marriage alliance. There are some that come to royal dignity by being affianced and betrothed to kings. There is many a crowned head that would not have been so by descent, but has come to be so by being given in wedlock to a royal consort. Now the Church of God is the Bride, the Lamb's wife, and, because he is crowned, therefore he will have it that his church shall be crowned too. He gave her himself; he gave her everything that he had; he relinquished heaven for her sake. He suffered on earth for her, bled on the cross for her, went into the grave for her, and now he will make her partaker of all he has. As he took all her shame, so she shall take her share in all his glory. He went to the cross for her, and she shall come to the crown with him. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple, because they are one with Jesus. Because he lives they live also; and because he as the only begotten Son stands ever in his Father's love, therefore do they stand in the same.

But fourthly (and you will think surely that all the rights in this world meet in these crowned heads, and so they do), they are kings by right of conquest and of victory. A crown should signify, and did signify in the olden times, struggling, battling, and contending. The first crowns, I suppose, were given to those who were the strongest men and had fought best in the day of battle. Well, we have already said that the crowns in heaven are all the gifts of grace, and yet at the same time it is true that those who have the crowns have fought for them: "These are they that came out of great tribulation." It was not that tribulation procured them their crowns; still it seems to be

a rule — the usual rule in God's church— that those of his servants who are to be rewarded should work, and those who are to be crowned should fight. At any rate, if you and I suppose we shall get the crown without contending for it, we shall find ourselves mistaken. Canaan belonged to the Israelites: it was theirs by a covenant of salt; but they had to fight for it, and dispute every inch with the Hivite and the Canaanite and the Jebusite, and so must we. We shall get to heaven by God's grace, but we must go on pilgrimage to get there. There is no chariot to carry us all along the road; we must foot it; we must climb the Hill of Difficulty, and go down to the Valley of Humiliation, and he that endureth to the end the same shall be saved. Master Bunyan's picture of the bright spirits on the top of the palace who sang, "Come in! Come in! Eternal glory thou shalt win" — would not have been complete if he had not pictured the armed men at the bottom of the stairs who stood there to keep back any who sought to enter the house — would not have been complete without the description of the man of the grave countenance. The man with the ink-horn said, "Set down thy name," and when he had put down his name, he drew his sword and fought desperately until he seemed to die, yet by-and-by he was seen on the top of the palace for he had won the day.

*"Lord, I must fight if I would reign,
Oh bear me safely through."*

They are kings then, because they have fought with sin and with temptations. They are not crowned without having contended for the victory; and you know how sharply some of them have had to contend, even unto blood have they resisted, striving against sin. Yea, the brightest and fairest of them have had to bear the brunt of fiercest persecutions, to fight with lions,

to die at the stake, and through sufferings that cannot be told have they entered into rest.

Then, fifthly, the crowned heads in heaven have their crowns, and their crowns befit them well, because of the nobility of their character. If honours were fairly distributed among men, we should not so often see the meanest spirit in the loftiest place. It is ever one of the hardships of this life. Of this the wise man complained — that he had seen servants on horseback and masters walking in the mire — the great spirits in the world in rags and the mean spirits clothed in scarlet — the men that deserved well lying at the gate licked by dogs, and the men that deserved ill faring sumptuously every day and clothed in scarlet and fine linen. Now it is not so in heaven. There, in heaven, nobility is given to the noble, and to the upright in character the reward of the righteous; for though it is not of debt, but of grace, yet the pure in heart shall see God, and they that are undefiled in the way shall inherit the blessing. O how bright those spirits are that are crowned! The crowns do well demean them: they are without fault before the throne of God. There is no infirmity about their character or imperfection about their constitution. If you should dwell with them a thousand ages you would never hear them speak an idle word, and if you could inspect their hearts with omniscient eyes you would not read therein one godless thought. They are sanctified perfectly, delivered from every taint of corruption, and now they are like their Lord himself in holiness of character. Well should they be crowned whose character has thus been made glorious by the work of the Spirit of God within them!

And, once more, they have another right to their crowns, because those crowns represent real possessions. There are little princes in this world whose principalities are about as large as ordinary kitchen gardens, and they account themselves very great indeed. The man of great esteem is like John R. in

English history, who had not a foot of ground. The less the man's possession, often the man's greater self-possession. But in heaven there are no pauper princes. There they are rich to all the intents of bliss. They have their crowns, but they have their kingdoms. All things are theirs — the gift of God — and God is theirs and Christ is theirs. They are clothed with honour and majesty — not outwardly only but inwardly — and they have all the concomitants that should go with royal dignity. Secmeth it not, however, like a dream, as one thinks it over and tries to realise it! Let us pause one moment and follow the reverie, to which a well assured faith gives substantial reality. You and I, if we believe in Jesus, will soon sit with Jesus, where we shall be crowned! We are poor to-day, obscure, and ignoble: we have no influence, it may be, and possibly are of little account among our fellows; but within a short time, perhaps ere this year or even this month shall have run out its anxious days, we shall be with crowns upon our heads spiritually. We shall be before the throne in spirit, and then by and by when the Lord shall come, we shall in body as well as in spirit sit there raised from the dead and made perfect for ever, enjoying the rank of kings and priests unto our God, for we shall reign for ever and ever! Can you conceive of it? Bunyan represents Mercy as laughing in her sleeve. Truly, as we think this over, one feels inclined to laugh for very joy of heart. Shall I wear a croton? Those who were despised and rejected of men and counted fools — will they be kings? Those saints that were made to lie in prison for their Master's sake, and no names of ignominy were thought base enough for them — will they be kings? Will the angels be courtiers, while these humble ones, raised and changed, but yet the same, sit as kings in the midst of the courts of heaven, there to abide for ever? It will be even so! Come! If the head aches tonight, let the reflection that it will soon be crowned be a consolation to you. Come! If you have had much to worry you

throughout the day, let the sweet thought that you will soon be where not a wave of trouble shall ever cross your peaceful breast, be a rich consolation to you. There is a throne in heaven that no one can occupy but you, and there is a crown in heaven that no other head can wear but yours, and there is a part in the eternal song that no voice can ever compass but yours, and there is a glory to God that would be wanting if you did not come to render it, and there is a part of infinite majesty and glory that would never be reflected unless you should be there to reflect it! Wherefore comfort one another with this, that ere long you shall be there! Because the grace of God has elected you, you have an hereditary right through the new birth; you have a marriage right by reason of union with Christ; you have rights of conquest as a warrior; you shall have the rights of character, for your character will be perfect ere long; and you have the rights of possession, for God has given you all that which goes with the crown.

II. Well, now, secondly we come to a department of our subject which seems more easy to believe. Though they all have crowns, **THEY ALL CAST THEM BEFORE THE THRONE**. We Can well conceive that; for to many of us that would be the first impulse of our minds. If ever we get to those sacred heights we will do adoring homage, and if ever we receive any honours we will present them to him to whom all the honour is due. Why, then, ask ye now, do they cast their crowns at the foot of the throne? There are four answers which may very properly be given.

The first, no doubt, is for the reason of solemn reverence. They see more of God than we do, therefore are they more filled with awe and thrilled with admiration. From what we — who worship, as it were, in his outer courts, and get but distant glimpses of his majesty and his mercy — from what we at present know of God we should be constrained to say, “Not

unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory for thy mercy and thy truth's sake." But where God more gloriously reveals himself, and where his attributes are more clearly seen, no doubt there is more overwhelming emotion, and more intense reverence; hence at once, and of spontaneous impulse, the soul pays all the homage that it can before the throne of God. Methinks it would seem to them as though it could not be that they could sit with crowned heads in the presence of the King of kings. That head that once was crowned with thorns, when we see it adorned with the royal diadem, surely we should not bear to be crowned in the presence of such an one! For what are we, and what is our Father's house? God has done all he can for us, yet what shall we be as compared with him, the infinite and eternal! and as compared with Christ, the ever-blessed who died for us? O, our reverence will always make us feel in the lowliest state of self-abasement at the foot of the throne!

Moreover, they are no doubt actuated by sincere humility. Reverence to God always brings a humble opinion of one's own self. Here below, beloved, we sometimes murmur at the divine will when his appointments cross and foil our inclinations. Were we more humble and less self-opinionated we should utterly distrust ourselves, and put implicit confidence in him. We should at once cast our wills at the Lord's feet. Here we set up our own opinion in opposition to the revealed will of God. We should not do that if we knew ourselves, but we should lay our judgment at the foot of the throne. But up there they judge righteous judgments, and, knowing God and beholding his glory, they shrink into nothing and lay themselves at his feet — much more do they renounce their will. They feel, they know, they confess, that any honour or desert they have has been obtained through the grace of God — that they must fully, heartily, unreservedly ascribe to that grace that which they dare not arrogate to themselves.

Doubtless, also, they do this for another reason, namely, because of their profound gratitude. They bless God that they are where they are, and what they are. If you ask those before the throne, they will tell you that not only do they owe their crowns to grace, but every single gem in their crowns. They have not one single star in their diadem but what the Lord put there; and there is not a single sparkle of any crystal sapphire that is in their coronet but what they may trace the flashing gleam to the sovereign grace of God. Therefore, how could they keep anything to themselves? Gratitude constrains them to lay their crowns where their crowns came from.

And, above all, they are actuated by intense affection. They love their Lord, and loving their Lord they do anything to adore him. Self-denial is the name we give on earth to that grace which not only ignores but consumes one's self in the fervor of zeal, in the passion of love. What word would answer for the like? — though the greater vehemence of those in heaven I cannot tell. They are glad to fling their richest goods, their choicest trophy, their most cherished treasure, at his feet: they love him so. Here we love ourselves, and cherish some fond attachment to our fellow-creatures also, and our hearts are stolen away by some earthly object, but there they love God intensely, continually, undividedly, without a flaw, and consequently they cast everything down before him, and they lay their crowns at his feet.

As we see what they do, let us consider what we should do, and anticipate what we shall do when we join that august assembly. I would like to have a bright crown, bright with many gems of souls turned to righteousness, for they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as stars for ever; but I think the sweetness will be to have a bright crown to lay at his feet, not for the sake of wearing it but giving it, if thereby a saved one might give honour to his Saviour. You will notice they do not

attempt to put the crown upon the Lord's head. No, we cannot add to his splendour! He is infinitely glorious! Without creatures, without servants, without saints, he is glorious: we cannot add to his glory; we can but lay our crowns at his feet. We cast them at the feet, though we cannot put them on the monarch's head. And would not we wish to have as bright a crown as possible, for the sake of placing it there. o, fight, thou soldier of Christ, and bear hardness that thy crown may be a precious one. Pray, minister of God, that you may preach with all your heart and soul and strength, that your diadem may be a sparkling one. Dear sister in your tent, or dear brother out in the battle, be valiant for God; for we all agree in this, that, whatever the crown shall be, at his dear feet we cast it.

III. Now I come to the practical lessons which these simple facts should teach us.

There is at first sight a simple, obvious reflection, which will readily occur to the thoughtful hearer. By this text, we can know whether we are on the way to heaven or not; because no man goes to heaven to learn for the first time heavenly things. We must be scholars in Christ's school here, or else we cannot be taken into Christ's college above. If you and I should walk into some great cathedral where they were singing, and ask to be allowed to sing in the choir, they would ask whether we had ever learnt the tune, and they would not let us join unless we had. Nor can we expect that untrained voices should be admitted into the choirs above. Now, dear brothers and sisters, have you learnt to cast your crowns at the Saviour's feet already? Have you been professors of religion for some years, and been honored in the Sabbath-school class, or in the ministry, and have you been enabled to maintain an upright character? Well, in some measure, you have a crown. Are you in the habit continually of casting that at his feet? Let me put it to you: — have you anything that you call your own to boast of?

Have you some good things that you have done that you could speak of? Could you say, like one of old, "Lord, I thank thee that I am not as other men"? Have you been very good and industrious, very consistent and persevering, and do you feel you deserve a good deal of esteem and honour as an acknowledgment of your distinguished services? My dear friend, I am afraid you are learning a music that will never answer in heaven. There is no one in glory that ever says — "I have done well: I deserve credit and honour." Quite the reverse. There the one music is, "Non nobis Domino!" "Not unto us, Lord! Not unto us!" Have you learnt that? Is that your spirit every day? O, I think I hear one say, "Yes, indeed it is; for I have nothing whatever that I can boast of. I cannot say that I lay my crown at his feet: I do not seem to have any." Yet, very likely, the person who is saying that is the one who is serving God more zealously than any of us; for, it is the mark of God's children that the more beautiful they are the more uncomely they think themselves; they that are very lovely themselves, all unconscious of their own attractions, can see a loveliness in others, while they perceive nothing to recommend their own character. When you yourself are mourning and lamenting that you are so deformed or so deficient, it is a mark that you are better than you think. The spirit that gives all glory to God, and takes no glory to itself, is the spirit that is on the road to heaven. May you judge yourselves by that!

The next lesson, beloved, is a lesson of unanimity. Our text says they all cast their crowns before the throne. There are no divided opinions in heaven, no sects and parties, no schisms there. They are all in perfect harmony and sweet accord. What one does, all do. They cast their crowns, without exception, before the throne. Let us begin to practise that unanimity here. As fellow Christians, let us get rid of everything that would divide us from each other, or separate us from our Lord. I do

not read that there was a single elder who envied his brother's crown, and said, "Ah, I wish I were such an one as he is, and had his crown." I do not read that one of them began to find fault with his brother's crown, and said, "Ah, his jewels may be bright, but mine have a peculiar tint in them, and are of greater excellence." I do not read ought of dissension; they were all unanimous in casting their crowns at Jesus' feet. They were all unanimous in glorifying God. And it is high time we gave over congratulating ourselves, or censuring our fellow Christians. Rest assured there is something in the man you condemn, if he be a child of God, which condemns you, and you might do well to become a scholar of his in some respects. If any honourable rivalries occur among brethren, let both cast their crowns at the foot of the cross, or at the foot of the throne, and ascribe all to him who gave them. Those that have obtained the prize are unanimous in their ascription of praise. Do you ask the reason? I suppose, first, it is because their understanding is alike transparent. Here our understandings are divided: one cannot see this, and another cannot see that. There are a great many differences of opinion, though there is only one truth after all. The fault must be in our perception; and, doubtless, the blame may be distributed among us; but none the less does our allegiance to truth demand that we stand by our own convictions, or rather by God's revelation. We cannot all be right: it is no use our professing that we are. When a person says, "You must give up this, and you must give up that, for the sake of charity," they do but ask us to practise benevolence at the expense of honesty. What right have I to give up a truth? Truth is truth, and we must fight for it, and die for it, if need be. Every effort to promote union among Christians by compromise is treachery to the Most High. If you are right and I am wrong, contradict me; or if I am right and you are wrong, I will contradict you. Yet I will not outrage charity, I will rather cherish it. Is my opponent

poor, I would supply his need without regard to his creed? Be he a Jew or a Papist, give him his civil rights. Let them benefit by our good works; but let us never connive at their evil. The way to unity is to find the truth out, and acknowledge it together. When we come to the word of God all of us, we shall come together; but any patching up, making this compromise and that unwarrantable concession, is all wrong. If it did lead to a unity, the unity would be worse than a division. In heaven the understandings are clarified and purified; they understand that their salvation is of grace, and they all cast their crowns at Jesus' feet. Wesley does it; so does Toplady. The Arminian that preached doctrines that sounded like the will of the flesh, casts his crown as freely as the Antinonian who was wont to say, "It is of grace; it is of grace alone." There are no differences there. They have come to see eye to eye, because they see with the eyes of the pure in heart who have been made to see God.

But then they are all agreed in heart as well as in understanding. They love each other, and they love God: all their affections flow in one channel and in one direction. Hence unitedly they cast their crowns before the throne. Brethren, let us stick together closely in unity of judgment and heart. We have done so many a year to my marvel and astonishment. May the same Spirit of God who has made us a three-fold cord in our unity with Christ, keep us so in years to come, if it please him to spare our lives. May we in this church be like the four and twenty elders, always casting our crowns before throne.

Once again, these redeemed ones in heaven teach us the true way of happiness. They set before us what perfect bliss is. You observe, it does not consist in selfishness. Never believe that possible. If a man says, "I shall make myself happy," he will rather mar than make happiness for himself; but when he seeks the glory of God, he will be happy in the pursuit as well as in the attainment of his object. Did you ever go out for a day to

enjoy yourself? If you went out with that intent I am sure you would find yourself hard to please; but if you went out to enjoy the society of other people, or to help them to enjoy themselves, you will most likely have been very well rewarded. There is no happiness beneath the clouds like the happiness of unselfishness. Strip yourself, and you clothe yourself. Throw money away, and you grow rich — I mean in a spiritual sense. To scatter is to gather; to give is to grow rich. It is a hard lesson for some minds to learn, but it is a lesson which Christ taught us. He saved others, but himself he could not save; and yet he has glorified both himself and his Father by that very sacrifice of himself.

Happiness, again, consists in adoration, for these blessed spirits find it to be their happiness to adore God. The happiest days you ever spent are those in which you worshipped God most. If you are doing a great deal, but have your minds far off from God, your labour will be irksome, your spirits will flag, and you will lack the stimulus of his approbation. Mary was happy at her Master's feet, because she was there adoring him. Mind you have much of Mary's spirit, and adore God all day long, for that is the vestibule of heaven.

But then they were not merely happy because they were self-denying and adoring, but because they were practical. They took off their crowns and laid them before the throne. And our joy on earth must lie in practically carrying out our principles. The best religion in the world laid by will be of no good. You shall only get joy out of it when you throw it into the wine-press in clusters and tread it in practical service. Cast your ability to do and to suffer, as well as the crown of your labour and patience, at the foot of your God; serve him with all your heart and wisdom and strength, and thus, thy self-denial and adoration being mixed therewith, you shall realise on earth

as much as possible a foretaste of what the joy of heaven may be.

O, that our souls may be always aspiring towards this blessed place where we are to dwell, proving the sincerity of our faith by fighting under God's banner for the crown — by living in the spirit of adoption, whereby we prove our right to our crown by cultivating daily communion with Christ, whereby we prove our union with him by always ascribing all honour, power, and blessing to the Lord our God, whereby we anticipate the homage of heaven. Brethren and sisters, be not slack in worship. I am afraid we are. We are sometimes told that in the Church of England the most prominent thing in worship is prayers, and that we do not come together so much to pray as to hear a sermon. There may be some truth in the charge that is thus preferred against us, and if there be truth in it, do not let it be so any longer. But I hold that hearing a sermon is worship. If it be practically heard it is worship, and if it be applied to the soul, there is no higher adoration on the part of the entire man than listening to the truth which God will speak through the minister to our ear and heart. It is a part of worship, and a very blessed part too. But mind you make it so, and let it be so to us that while some worship within walls we worship everywhere, live worshipping, live adoring. Recollect, sermons are as it were but the wet block, but adoration is the great end of preaching. "Praying is the end of preaching," says Herbert. So it is; but praising is the end of praying — the result which is to come out of it all. It is that for which praying exists, that God may be glorified. Pray God to help you to do so in every breath you draw, in every act you do. Let your common actions be a part of your holy, priestly life, and be priests and kings in your doings in the house, in the shop, in the bam, and in the field. The Lord bless you, dear friends.

And as to those here present who know not Christ, ye will

never be crowned, if ye abide in ignorance of Him, or in enmity against Him. Oh, that the Lord would change your hearts and lead you to the Saviour! May you see him crowned with thorns and trust in him, and then you shall come to be crowned with the royal diadem hereafter. The Lord grant it for his name's sake. Amen!

TWENTY-SIX
THE ELDERS BEFORE THE THRONE

SERMON GIVEN ON MARCH 23, 1862

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 4:4 & 10-11

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 8

“ And round about the throne were four-and-twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four-and-twenty elders sitting clothed in white raiment ; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.”

REVELATION 4:4

“ The four-and-twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour

*and power : for thou hast created all things,
and for thy pleasure they are and were
created."*

REVELATION 4:10-11

THE universe of God is one; heaven and earth are not so separate as unbelief has dreamed. As the Lord hath but one family, written in one register, redeemed with one blood, quickened by one Spirit, so this whole household abides in one habitation evermore. We who are in the body abide in the lower room which is sometimes dark and cold, but bears sufficient marks that it is a room in God's house; for it is to the eye of our faith often lit up with heavenly lustre, and we, even we, while we are yet here, are by blessed earnestness made partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. It is the same house, I say; but ours is the lower room, while our glorified brethren are up there, in the upper story, where the sunlight streams in everlastingly, where no chilling winds or poisonous breath can ever reach. It was well said that God's great house seems to have two wings; the one was a hospital and the other a palace. We are as yet in the wing on the left hand side, which is the hospital. We came into it sick even unto death, leprous to our very core, polluted from head to foot, having no soundness in us anywhere; and in this hospital we are undergoing the process of cure— a cure which is already certain, which is soon to be perfected; and then we shall pass from the hospital, the lazaretto, into the palace, where "without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing," we shall be recognised as the aristocracy of God, princes of the blood-royal of the universe, "sons of God, and joint-heirs with Christ Jesus." Still is it but one building; one roof covers the whole, both lazaretto and palace; one family,

we dwell in it — one Church, above, beneath, though now divided by the narrow partition of death.

Now, to a great extent there is a likeness between the lower room and the upper room. As on earth we prepare for heaven so the state of the saints on earth is heaven foreshadowed. In many respects the condition of the child of God on earth is a type of his condition in heaven; and I may say without fear of question that what the character of the saints is above, that should be the character of the saints below. We may very safely take for our example those glorified spirits. We need not be afraid that we shall be led astray by imitating them, by learning their occupations, or by attempting to share their joys. Surely the things in heaven are patterns of the things on earth, and as they are before the throne so ought we to be, and so shall we be in proportion as we live up to our privileges, and receive the likeness and image of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Brethren, beloved, it is upon this subject that I want to speak this morning. God is making heaven very near to us. We are now so large a Church that according to the laws of mortality, we lose five or six every month by death, and frequently two or three are removed in a week. We can hardly hope to meet together upon a single Sabbath without hearing that another of the stars is set. Some little time ago we went to the grave with an excellent elder of our Church, who had long known the Master, and had served him well: and now, during the coming week, it will be our lot to perform the same mournful office for another brother who has been in Christ, I suppose, these forty or fifty years, and who has served this Church for some little time with industry and zeal, but this week has been removed from our midst to join “the general assembly and church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven.” The veil grows thinner and thinner, and our faith in the unseen grows stronger. As the advanced guard of the army wade through the stream,

and we hear their triumphant shouts upon the other shore, this world fades away, and that better land stands out in stronger and more glorious reality than it did before. Come, let us talk to one another by the way this morning of that better land, and let us encourage each other's hearts to make ourselves through God such as they are who sit upon their thrones, and to make this land, through the Spirit, such as that land is where God sheds his light for ever.

With regard to the spirits before the throne, we shall have three things to say this morning. First, a little concerning their state and enjoyments; then, further, concerning their occupations and spirit; and a few words with regard to their testimony and precepts to us, as, speaking from the upper spheres, they urge us to follow their example.

I. First, then, brethren, with regard to THE STATE AND ENJOYMENTS OF THE SPIRITS BEFORE THE THRONE. In John's vision you perceive that the Church of Christ is represented by the four-and-twenty elders who sat round the throne. We are to look upon them as being the representatives of the great body of the faithful gathered to their eternal rest.

Mark, then, in the first place, that the saints in heaven are represented as "elders," which we take to refer not merely to the office of the eldership, as it is exercised among us, although it seems most fitting that the officers should be the representatives of the whole body, but the reference is rather to the fulness of growth of believers before the throne. Here we have elders, and those who are elders in office should be chosen, because they have had spiritual experience, are well taught in the things of the kingdom of heaven, and are therefore elders by grace as well as elders by office; but in all our Churches we have many who are babes in Christ, who as yet can only receive the elements of the gospel. We have many others who are

young men, strong, but not matured. They have the vigour of manhood, but they have not yet the ripeness of advanced age. The elders in the Church are those who by reason of years have had their senses exercised; they are not the saplings of the forest, but the well-rooted trees; they are not the blades of corn up-springing, but the full com in the ear awaiting the reaper's sickle. Such are the saints before the throne. They have made wondrous strides in knowledge; they understand now the heights and depths, the lengths and breadths of the love of Christ, which still surpasses even their knowledge. The meanest, if there be such differences, the meanest of the glorified understands more of the things of God than the greatest divine on earth. The rending of the veil of death is the removal of much of our ignorance. It may be that the saints in heaven progress in knowledge—that is possible, but it is certain that at the time of their departure they made a wondrous spring; they are babes no longer; they are children and infant beginners no more; God teacheth them in one five minutes, by a sight of the face of Jesus, more than they could have learned in threescore years and ten while present in the body and absent from the Lord. Their heresies are all cleared away with their sins; their mistakes are all removed; the same hand which wipes away all tears from their eyes wipes away all motes from their eyes too. Then they become sound in doctrine, skilful in teaching; they become masters in Israel by the sudden infusion of the wisdom of God by the Holy Ghost. They are “elders” before the throne. They are not unripe corn gathered green and damp, but they are all fully ripe, and they come to the garner as shocks of corn come in their season.

Perhaps they are represented as elders to show the dignity and gravity which shall surround saints of God in heaven. We sometimes hear complaints made about the younger members of Churches, that they are somewhat light in their conversation.

Well, this has always been the fault of young people, and, as I said the other day, when one complained, I could not make lambs into sheep, and while they were lambs I suppose they would show some playfulness. It seems to be the natural failing of young people to be overflowing with mirth, and sometimes overtaken with levity. But there is a gravity which is very becoming in Christians, and there is a solidity which is extremely comely in the young believer; and I think when we make a profession of our faith in Christ, though we are not to cast away our cheerful faces, but to be more happy than ever we were before, yet we must put away all unseemly levity, and walk as those who are looking for the coming of the Son of Man, hearing this voice in our ears, "What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness!" Now that fault can never be brought against the Church of God before the throne; there they are elders, glorious, blissful, happy, but yet serene and majestic in their joy. Theirs is not the prattling joy of the child, but the deep silent bliss of the full-grown man. As the senators in the Roman senate sat down in solemn grandeur, so that even the invading barbarians were overawed by their majestic bearing, so let our holy tranquility and joyful serenity cast an influence over the foes of our religion. Look upwards, Christians. There are the elders before the throne, representatives of what you and I, and all of us who trust in Christ, shall soon be; let us be laying aside childish things; let us be getting ready for the elders' dignity; let us leave the toy, the trifle, the plaything, to those who know not the immortal manhood of believers, and let us go on unto perfection, growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

In passing, I may observe, that the number of four-and-twenty is somewhat puzzling. There have been different attempts made to account for it. They say that this was the

number of the Sanhedrim; but that is not clear. Others think that as the number twelve was the symbol of the Jewish Church, in the twelve tribes, so twelve more may have been added to represent the accession of the Gentile Church; or it may show the multiplication of the Church, that though small, so that it is numbered by twelve, its number, while still definite and complete, is now larger than it was before. But, still better, I think, as there were twenty-four courses of Levites, who were porters at the gate of the temple, and twenty-four courses of priests who offered sacrifice, so the number twenty-four is made use of to show that the service of God in his temple is complete, that there are as many as will be wanted, that every part of the divine service will be taken up, and around that altar which smokes before God eternally there shall be a full complement of those who shall bow before him, and do him homage.

2. But, secondly, you will notice that these elders are said to be around the throne. We suppose, as near as we can catch the thought of John, sitting in a semi-circle, as the Jewish Sanhedrim did around the Prince of Israel. It is a somewhat singular thing that in the passage in Canticles, where Solomon sings of the king sitting at his table, the Hebrew has it "a round table." From this, some expositors, I think without straining the text, have said, "There is an equality among the saints." In heaven they are not some sitting at the head, and some sitting lower down, but there is an equality in the position and condition of glorified spirits. Certainly that idea is conveyed by the position of the four-and-twenty elders. We do not find one of them nearer than the other, but they all sat round about the throne. We believe, then, that the condition of glorified spirits in heaven, is that of nearness to Christ, clear vision of his glory, constant access to his court, and familiar fellowship with his person. Nor do we think that there is any difference before the

throne between one saint and another. We believe that all the people of God, apostles, martyrs, ministers, or private and obscure Christians, shall all have the same place near the throne, where they shall for ever gaze upon their exalted Lord, and for ever be satisfied in his love. There shall not be some at a distance, far away in the remote streets of the celestial city, and others in the broad thoroughfares; there shall not be some near the centre, and others far away on the verge of the wide circumference; but they shall all be near to Christ, all ravished with his love, all eating and drinking at the same table with him, as equally his favourites and his friends.

Now, brothers and sisters, as we bade you imitate the saints in their eldership and perfection, so would we exhort you to imitate them in their nearness to Christ. Oh, let us be on earth as the elders are in heaven, sitting round about the throne. May Christ be the centre of this Church! May he be the centre of your thoughts, the centre of your life. If an angel should fly across this assembly this morning, when he came back to heaven, could he say, "I saw them in the house of God, sitting around the throne. Their eyes were gazing on the slaughtered Lamb; their hearts were loving and praising him; they were desiring to do him homage and to pay him reverence?" And what think you of to-morrow, and the other days of the week? Will it be true of you that you are sitting before the throne? Brothers and sisters, we are out of our proper place, when we are looking after anything but Christ. "We are not our own; we are bought with a price." Why live as if we were our own? He is our husband, our soul is espoused to him. Oh! how can we live at such a distance from him? He is our life; he makes us live, he makes us blest: how can we be so much forgetful of him? How can our hearts be such strangers to their beloved? Jesu! draw us nearer to thyself! Oh to be nearer to thy throne, Lord, even while we are here! O take thou us up to thee, or else come thou

down to us. Say unto us, “Abide in me, and I in you;” and permit our souls to say, “His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me.”

*“Abide with me from morn till eve,
For without thee I cannot live;
Abide with me when night is nigh,
For without thee I dare not die.”*

3. A third point of likeness strikes us at once. It seems that the elders sitting around the throne were represented to the illuminated eye of John as “clothed in white raiment” Not in raiment of party-colors, whereon there were some spots, and yet some signs of whiteness. They are without fault before the throne of God; they have “washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb,” and the Spirit of God also has so thoroughly renewed them, that they are “without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing;” they have been presented holy and unblamable before the throne of God. Brothers and sisters, in this too, they are an example to us. Oh that the Spirit of God might keep the members of this Church, that our garments might be always white. Perfection we must not hope to see here; but oh, we must aim after it. If one should never unite with a Christian Church till he found one which is perfect and free from all fault, then such a man must be a schismatic for ever, for with no Christian people could he ever join. Yet, this is what we aspire unto— to be faultless before God. We desire so to walk, and so to act among men, that our conduct may never bring a slur upon our profession— that our language, our actions, our motives, everything that is about us, may witness to the fact that we have been with Jesus, and have learned of him. O brothers and sisters, it is impossible for one pastor, assisted even by the most earnest of elders, to oversee so large a flock as

this. Let me ask, have you kept your garments white this last week? Oh, if you have stained them, ¹ beseech you, repent, bitterly repent before God; and if any of you have backslidden, I pray you, do not be hypocrites; let your guilt be fully confessed before God. If you cannot honour this Church, do not dishonour it; if you cannot glorify Christ by your walk and conversation, at least do not trample under foot his blood, and put his cross to an open shame. There is nothing which can so injure a Church, and cut the sinews of its strength, as the unholiness of its members. When we are “fair as the moon, and clear as the sun,” then we shall be “terrible as an army with banners;” but not till then. Those blots upon the escutcheon, those spots upon the garment, are soon perceived by a lynx-eyed world; and then they turn round and say, “Ah! these are your Christians; this is your religion!” The sons of Belial make excuses for their own conscience, and go on in their sin, hardened by our mistakes. Oh, let this be your prayer, I exhort you, you who are mighty in prayer, never forget this day and night, “Lord, keep thy people; hold thou them up.” I can say it has been at all times the bitterest draught I have ever had to drink, when any who have professed the name of Christ have turned back unto vanity. To bury you is but a blessed duty in comparison with noting and correcting backsliding and apostacy. I know my prayer for myself has been, a hundred times, “A speedy death, a soon and sudden sleeping beneath the green turf, or even a painful, agonizing, languishing decay, upon a bed of pain, rather than you should live to see your pastor stain his profession, and fall from his integrity.” If it be so with the minister, it must be so with each of you. Better for you that you depart at once than that you should live bearing the name of Christ, to make that name a reproach and a bye-word among the heathen. Lord, help thou us, that we, like thy saints above, may be clothed in white garments.

4. Further, to carry on the parallel. You perceive that these elders exercised a priesthood. Indeed, their being clothed in white garments, while it is an emblem of their purity, also represents them as being priests unto God. They themselves expressly sing in the 10th verse of the 5th chapter, "Thou hast made us unto our God kings and priests." They exercise the office of the priesthood, as you perceive, by the double offering of prayer and praise. They hold in their hands the censers full of sweet incense, and the harps which give forth melodious sounds. Brethren, in the wilderness of old they were not all priests. One special tribe, and one family out of that tribe, alone could exercise that office; the rest of the people stood in the outer court. As for the most holy place, into that only came the high priest, and he only once a year, so much exclusion was there in that age of shadows. But now all believers are priests; we have all a right to stand in the priest's place, to offer sacrifice and incense. Nay, more, through Christ we enter into that which is within the veil, and stand in the most holy place, and look at the bright light from the Shekinah, fearing not that we shall die, but having boldness and confidence through the new and living way, the rent body of Christ. The saints before the throne are represented as all of them in the holy place, round the throne, all officiating, every one of them presenting sacrifice. Brethren, what are we doing? Let us look up to them as the priests of God, and then ask ourselves, are we celebrating his worship too? Brother, did you this morning, before you came up to this house, lift up your hand with the bowl of incense in it, in your earnest prayer for a blessing upon his people? Have you this day in our sacred song, been laying your fingers mystically among the strings of your golden harp? What did you do last week, my brethren? What were you? Can you say that you were a priest? Or, must you not blush that you were rather a buyer and a seller, or a thinker and a writer, than a priest unto

our God? And yet this is our high calling; this is our blessed vocation. Our earthly calling is but little honour to us, nor should it engross our richest thoughts; our heavenly calling is of the most importance; it is that which is to last for ever; it is that which should have the cream of our soul's attention. We are priests. Oh! brethren, if we have failed in the past, may God give us grace for the future! and during the coming days of the next work-day week, may he help us, that our buyings and our sellings, our travellings and our tarryings at home, may all be the exercise of priesthood! You know, you can make "the bells upon the horses" holiness to the Lord, and the very pots of your house can be as the bowls upon the altar; you need not go out of your everyday callings to be priests, but be priests in your callings. Sanctify the Lord God in your workshops, in your fields, in your market-places, in your exchanges; and whatsoever ye do, whether ye eat, or drink, or whatever ye do, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, who hath made you priests and kings unto him.

I know there is a sad tendency among us all to leave the priesthood to some peculiar clan. Mark you, members of this Church, I will be no priest for you. It is as much as I can do to exercise the priesthood to which God calls me on my own account, to offer my own thanks and my own petitions. I will have none of your responsibilities; you must be priests for yourselves. You cannot shift this burden off, nor would you wish, I am sure, if ye be true-hearted. Ye say ye are poor, ye are unknown, ye have no talent. Ye need it not, these cannot make you priests. How came the sons of Aaron to the priesthood? By birth. So with you. You have been "born not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, nor of blood, but of God," and the priesthood is the inalienable inheritance of the new birth. Exercise your office, then, be ye who ye may, O ye beloved of the Lord. In the name of him who hath "begotten you again unto a

lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, live as men sanctified for divine service, who cannot and must not be servants of men and slaves of sin.

5. Once more, and I think I shall have said enough upon this first point. There is yet another likeness between the saints in heaven and those on earth. You perceive that these had on their heads crowns of gold. They reigned with Christ. He was a king, and he made them kings with him. As in the old Persian court the princes of the blood wore crowns, so in the court of heaven the princes of the blood, the brethren of the Lord, are crowned too. They are royal senators; they sit upon thrones, even as he has overcome, and sits down with his Father on his throne. These thrones they have to show their dominion, their rights and jurisdiction. Know ye not that we shall judge angels, and that when Christ shall come he will bring his people with him, and they will sit upon his throne as co-assessors with him? Then the wicked, the persecutors, the revilers of God's people, shall be brought to judgment, and the saints whom they despised shall be their Judges? So that when Christ shall say, "Depart, ye cursed," there shall be heard the thundering assent of the ten thousands of his saints, as they say "Amen," and confirm from their hearts the sentence of the all-righteous Judge. Therefore do these elders sit upon their thrones.

Now, beloved, let us imitate them in this. "Oh!" say you, "but I cannot wear a crown as they do." Nevertheless, you are a king; for they who are Christ's are kings. Take care, brother, that thou wearest thy crown, by reigning over thy lusts. Reign over thy sins. Reign over thy passions. Be as a king in the midst of all that would lead thee astray. Christ Jesus has broken the neck of thy sin; put thy foot upon it; keep it under; subdue it. Be king in the dominions of thine own being. In the world at large act a king's part. If any would tempt thee to betray Christ for gain, say, "How can I? I am a king. How shall I betray

Christ?" Let the nobility of your nature come out in your actings. Forgive in a royal manner, as a king can forgive. Be ready to give to others as God hath helped you, as a king gives. Let your liberality of spirit be right royal. Let your actions never be mean, sneaking, cowardly, dastardly. Do the right thing, and defy the worst. Dare all your foes in the pursuit of that which is right, and let men see while they look upon you that there is a something under your homely appearance which they cannot understand. Men make a deal of fuss about the blood of the aristocracy; I dare say it is not very different from the blood of crossing-sweepers. But there is a great deal of difference between the life-blood of the saints and the life-blood of the proudest prince; for they who love Christ have fed upon his flesh, and have drunk of his blood, and have been made partakers of the divine nature. These are the royal ones; these are the aristocrats; these are the nobility, and all are mean beside. Christians, perhaps some of you have not reigned as kings during the last week. You have been either murmuring, like poor whining beggars, or you have been scraping, like dunghill rakers, with your covetousness, or you have been sinning, like idle boys in the street, who roll in the mire. You have not lived up to your kingship. Now I pray you, ask God's grace that during the week to come you may say of sin, "I cannot touch it, I am a king; I cannot demean myself with it;" that you may say of this earth's dross, "I cannot go down and scrape that; my heritage is above;" that ye may be able to say of everything that is low and mean, "Shall such a man as I do this? How can I come down from the elevated position to which God has called me, to act as others act, from their motives and with their ends?" Let, then, the state of the saints above, while it is the theme of our delightful thought, while we anticipate the time when we shall fully partake of it, be also an example to us while in these lands below.

II. Briefly upon our second point— THE OCCUPATION AND SPIRIT OF THOSE GLORIFIED ONES, AS THEY SHOULD BE IMITATED BY US BELOW.

1. Notice their occupation. First of all it is one of humility. At the tenth verse in our fourth chapter we perceive it is written, "They fall down before him." They are kings, but yet they fall down— they wear royal crowns, but yet they prostrate themselves. They are second to none in God's universe; they stand as first in the peerage of creation; yet before the king they have no honour and no esteem, but as if they were slaves and menials, they cast themselves upon their faces before his throne, having nothing of their own whereof to glory, but boasting alone in Him. The more holy, the more humble. Where holiness is in perfection, there humility is in perfection too. The cherubim veil their faces with their wings, while they cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabbaoth." So do these elders, taking the same posture of humility, they bow before the throne.

Brothers and sisters, are we as humble as we should be? If we think we are, we at once betray our pride. But let us understand how unseemly anything but humility must be to us. We are yet on earth; if they in heaven boast not, how dare we? We are yet sinful and erring; if the spotless ones bow what shall we do? If we threw dust and ashes on our head, and acknowledged ourselves to be the vilest of the vile, yet were the words not too coarse for us, nor the action too humiliating. Far hence from us be the pride which would let us exalt ourselves. Pride is natural to us all brethren, we cannot get rid of it, even though we strive against it. What shall we say of those who nurture it— whose very carriage and walk betray the pride of their hearts? What shall we say of the pride which finds root in the purse, or that which shows itself in outward array and garments? What shall we say of the pride of station and of rank, which will not permit

the professedly Christian man to speak with his poorer brother? Oh! these are damnable things. I hope we despise, and are rid of these; but there is a subtler pride—a pride which apes humility—a pride which comes in after prayer, or after preaching, or after anything that is done for Christ? Let us strive against it, and be it our constant and daily endeavour to fall before the throne, “While less than nothing we can boast, and vanity confess.”

2. But as they fall before the throne in humility, you will note that they express their gratitude. It is said they cast their crowns before the throne. They know where they got them from, and they know to whom to ascribe the praise. Their crowns are their own, and, therefore, they wear them on their heads; their crowns were Jesu’s gift, and, therefore, they cast them at his feet. They wear their crown, for he hath made them kings, and they cannot refuse the dignity; but they cast the crown at his feet, for they are only kings by right received from him, and acknowledge him thus to be King of kings and Lord of lords. It was a custom, you know, in imperial Rome, for those kings who held dominion under the emperor, on certain occasions to take off their crowns and lay them down before the emperor, so that when he bade them put them on again, they had fully recognised that their rights of kingship flowed only through him. So do they who are before the throne. With what rapture, with what joy, with what delight, do they cast their crowns there! To think they have a crown, and a crown to cast before him! Brothers and sisters, I am afraid when you and I get any graces, or have been made useful in Christ’s cause, we are glad for the thing’s sake; but we are not right, if so; we should be glad because we have something to cast at his feet. Have you faith? I must thank him for faith, I must lay it at his feet, and say, “Jesu, use my faith for thy glory, for thou art its author and finisher.” If you and I shall by divine grace persevere to the end,

and shall arrive at heaven, it will be a joy to think that we are saved, but we will lay it all at the door of love divine. Will you wear a crown, believer? Will you accept jot or tittle of the glory? O no, ye will each of ye disown anything like the Arminian's proud boast of free self-will. It will be grace, grace, grace alone in heaven. There will be no division and no discord in that eternal hymn. We will cast our crowns at once before him, and we will say, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be all the praise." We imitate them, then, in this— in our gratitude mingled with humility,

3. Further, I well perceive that these elders spent their time in joyous song. How glorious was that strain— "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." These elders knew that the time was come when all earth and heaven should be more than usually glad. They, with the four living creatures, whom we take to be the representatives of some special order of presence-angels, about whom we know but little, led the strain; and as the music rolled through the aisles of heaven, distant angels, who were in all parts of God's dominion keeping watch and ward, stood still and listened till they had caught the strain; and then they joined with loudest notes, till from north and south, and east and west, from the highest star and from the uttermost depths, there came up the blessed refrain from ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing;" till, as these angelic ones sent up the song, the inferior creatures caught the divine infection, and in heaven and earth, the sea and the uttermost depths thereof, the voice was heard, and all creatures responded, while the universe echoed with the song, "Blessing, and honour, and

glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." This is the occupation of saints before the throne; be it yours, brothers and sisters. Let us, as God's redeemed, sing with all our hearts, and let us enlist others in the strain. Let us remember that we are to be leaders in the hymn of God's works. We are to begin with, "Bless the Lord, O my soul;" but we are not to end there. We are to go on bidding all God's works praise him, till we come to a climax like that of David, "Bless the Lord, ye hosts, ye ministers of his that do his pleasure; bless the Lord, all his works, in all places of his dominion; bless the Lord, O my soul." The world is the organ—we are the players. We are to put our fingers upon the notes, and wake the universe to thunders of acclaim. We are not to rest with our own feeble note, but we must wake even the dumb earth itself, till all the planets, listening to our earth, and joining her song, shall sing forth the music of the ages. God give you, brothers and sisters, to imitate the saints thus. Some of you perhaps are good hands at groaning; perhaps some of you have come up here to-day mourning and murmuring; lay these things aside; take up your proper vocation, and now smite the strings of your harp; magnify the Lord; let the day of jubilee come to your spirits. Ye saints of God, rejoice; yea, in your God exceedingly rejoice.

4. Yet once again, these saints not only offered praise, but prayer. This was the meaning of the bowls, which are so foolishly translated vials. A vial is precisely the opposite of the vessel that was intended: the vial is long and narrow, whereas, this is broad and shallow. A bowl is meant, full of incense, covered over with a lid, and perforated with holes, through which the smoke of the incense rises. This does not mean that the four-and-twenty elders offer the prayers of the saints below, but their own prayers. Some have thought, Is there any prayer in heaven? Certainly, there is room for prayer in heaven. If you

want proof, we have it in the chapter which follows the one out of which we have been reading this morning— the ninth verse of the sixth chapter— “I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” There is prayer. Perhaps the prayers of the saints are the major portion of that perpetual litany which goeth up to heaven. But leaving that for a moment, let us imitate them. If they pray, how much more reason have we? If they plead for the universal Church, they who enjoy the rest of God, how should we pray who are still in this land of temptation and of sin, who see the perils of our brethren, know their weaknesses and their afflictions. Let us draw near unto God; let us never cease day and night to offer intercession for the whole company of the elect.

5. I must not forget, however, here, that these elders before the throne were ready not only for prayer and praise, but for all kinds of service. You remember there was one of them, when John wept, who said, “Weep not.” Depend upon it that elder had been occupied in visiting the sick when he was on earth; and often when he had gone into their cottages and found them sorrowing, he had said unto them, “Weep not;” and the good man had not lost his character when he went to heaven, although it had been spiritualized and perfected; and seeing John weeping, he said to him, “Weep not.” Ah! those saints before the throne, if there were mourners there, would comfort them, I know; and if they could be sent down here to visit any of the sorrowing children of God, they would be too glad to do it. Then there was, you remember, another of the elders, who said to John, for his instruction, “Who are these that are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they that came

out of great tribulation." I venture to believe that this elder used to teach a catechumen class on earth; that he had been in the habit of teaching young people, and he put the question to John first, as he had been in the habit aforetime of putting it to young disciples on earth. The saved ones would be ready to teach us now, if they could; and they do to-day bear testimony for Christ, for to the ages to come God through his Church makes known to principalities and powers the exceeding riches of his grace.

Now, those before the throne are willing to comfort the weeper or to instruct the ignorant. Let us do the same! and may it be ours to wipe the tear from many an eye, to chase the darkness of ignorance from many a young heart. Have you been doing that lately, brothers and sisters? If not, mend your ways; be more earnest in these two good works, visit the fatherless, the widow, the suffering, the mourning, and to teach the ignorant and those that are out of the way.

III. And now, lastly, WHAT IS THEIR WORD AND LESSON TO US THIS MORNING? Bending from their shining thrones, being dead they yet speak; and they say to us thus:

First, by way of encouragement, brethren, follow on. Be not dismayed. We fought the same battles that you fight, and passed through the like tribulations; yet we have not perished, but enjoy the eternal reward. Press on; heaven awaits you; vacant thrones are here for you— crowns which no other heads can wear— harps that no other hands must play. Follow courageously, faithfully, trusting in him who hath begun the good work in you, and who will carry it on.

Hear them, again, as they say, mark the footsteps that we trod; for only in one way can you reach our rest. We have washed our robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. They say to all the world, If ye would be clean wash

there too. None but Jesus can save your souls. Trust in him; repose in his atonement; confide in his finished work; flee to his sacrificial blood. You shall be saved by faith in him, even as we have been.

*"I asked them whence their victory came ; they
with united breath
Ascribed their conquest to the Lamb, their
triumph to his death."*

Friends! are ye trusting in Christ? My hearers, many of you are perfect strangers to me this morning, I ask you, are you putting your trust in Christ? Have you come under the shadow of his cross, to find a refuge from his vengeance? If not, no golden crown can be for you; no harp of gold; but, whoever thou mayest be, if thou wilt believe in Christ Jesus, and put thy soul into his hand, thou shalt be a partaker of the glories which he hath laid up for them that love him.

Lastly, they say to us, as they look down from the battlements of heaven, Are ye getting ready to join our ranks, to take up our occupations, and to sing our song? Answer for yourself, my brother, as I must answer for myself. Are you living for your own pleasure? Then you must die; for "he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption." Are you living for Christ? Then shall you live; "because he lives you shall live also." Are you a priest to God today? You shall bear the golden bowl in heaven. Are you instead thereof a servant of your own body, your own lusts, your own gain, your own pleasure? Then the lowest depths must be your portion. Heaven is "a prepared place for a prepared people." Are we prepared? Brothers, sisters, can we say, "We hope in Christ; he is our only trust;" and do we endeavour to live to him? and though with many fail-

ings and frailties, yet still can we say, "For me to live is Christ?"
Oh! if it be so,

*"Come, death, and some celestial band, to bear
our souls away!"*

But if it be not so, then our end must be destruction,
because our God has been our belly.

REVELATION 5

TWENTY-SEVEN
THE LAMB IN GLORY

SERMON GIVEN ON JULY 14, 1889

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 5:6-7

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 35

*“And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne
and of the four living creatures, and in the
midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had
been slain, having seven horns and seven
eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent
forth into all, the earth. And he came and
took the book out of the right hand of him
that eat upon the throne.”*

REVELATION 5:6-7.

THE apostle John had long known the Lord Jesus as the Lamb.
That was his first view of him, when the Baptist, pointing to

Jesus, said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." He had been very familiar with this blessed personage, having often laid his head upon his bosom, feeling that this tender goodness of the Saviour proved him to be in nature gentle as a lamb. He had beheld him when he was brought "as a lamb to the slaughter," so that the idea was indelibly fixed upon his mind that Jesus, the Christ, was the Lamb of God. He knew that he was the appointed sacrifice, set forth in the morning and evening Lamb, and in the Paschal Lamb, by whose blood Israel was redeemed from death. In his last days the beloved disciple was to see this same Christ, under the same figure of a lamb, as the great revealer of secrets, the expounder of the mind of God, the taker of the sealed book, and the looser of the seals which bound up the mysterious purposes of God towards the children of men. I pray that we may have on this earth a clear and constant sight of the sin-bearing Lamb, and then, in yonder world of glory, we shall behold him in the midst of the throne and the living creatures and the elders.

The appearance of this Lamb at the particular moment described by John was exceedingly suitable. Our Lord usually appears when all other hope disappears. Concerning the winepress of wrath, it is he who saith, "I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with me." In the instance before us, the strong angel had proclaimed with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" And there was no response from heaven, or earth, or hell. No man was able to open the book, neither to look therein. The divine decrees must remain for ever sealed in mystery unless the once slain Mediator shall take them from the hand of God, and open them to the sons of men. When no one could do this, John wept much. At that grave moment the Lamb

appeared. Old Master Trapp says, "Christ is good at a dead lift"; and it is so. When there is utter failure everywhere else, then in him is our help found. If there could have been found another bearer of sin, would the Father have given his Only-Begotten to die? Had any other been able to unfold the secret designs of God, would he not have appeared at the angel's challenge? But he that came to take away the sin of the world now appears to take away the seals which bind up the eternal purposes. O Lamb of God, thou art able to do what none beside may venture to attempt! Thou comest forth when no one else is to be found. Remember, next time you are in trouble, that when no man can comfort and no man can save, you may expect the Lord, the ever-sympathetic Lamb of God, to appear on your behalf.

Before the Lamb appeared, while as yet no one was found worthy to look upon that book which was held in the hand of him that sitteth on the throne, John wept much. By weeping eyes the Lamb of God is best seen. Certain ministers of this age, who make so little of the doctrine of substitutionary sacrifice, would have been of another mind if they had known more contrition of heart and exercise of soul. Eyes washed by repentance are best able to see those blessed truths which shine forth from our incarnate God, the bearer of our sins. Free grace and dying love are most appreciated by the mourners in Zion. If tears are good for the eyes, the Lord send us to be weepers, and lead us round by Bochim to Bethel. I have heard the old proverb, "There is no going to heaven but by Weeping Cross"; and there seems no way of even seeing heaven, and the heavenly One, except by eyes that have wept. Weeping makes the eyes quick to see if there be any hope; and while it dims them to all false confidences, it makes them sensitive to the faintest beam of divine light. "They looked unto him, and were light-

ened: and their faces were not ashamed." Those who have laid eternal matters to heart so much as to weep over their own need, and that of their fellow-men, shall be the first to see in the Lamb of God the answer to their desires.

Yet observe, that even in this case human instrumentality was permitted; for it is written, "One of the elders saith unto me, Weep not." John the apostle was greater than an elder. Among them that are born of women, in the Church of God we put none before John, who leaned his head upon his Master's bosom; and yet a mere elder of the Church reproves and instructs the beloved apostle! He cheers him with the news that the Lion of the tribe of Juda had prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. The greatest man in the Church may be under obligations to the least: a preacher may be taught by a convert; an elder may be instructed by a child. Oh that we might be always willing to learn!— to learn of anyone, however lowly. Assuredly, we shall be teachable if we have the tenderness of heart which shows itself in weeping. This will make our souls like waxen tablets, whereon the finger of truth may readily inscribe its teaching. God grant us this preparation of heart!

May we come in a teachable spirit to the text, and may the Lord open our eyes to see and learn with John! It is no small favour that we have the record of the vision. Does not the Lord intend us to be partakers in it? The vision is that of a Lamb, a Lamb that is to open the book of God's secret purposes, and loose the seals thereof. The teaching of the passage is that the Lord Jesus, in his sacrificial character, is the most prominent object in the heavenly world. So far from substitution being done with, and laid aside as a temporary expedient, it remains the object of universal wonder and adoration. He that became a Lamb that he might take away the sin of the world, is not ashamed of his humiliation, but still manifests it to adoring

myriads, and is, for that very reason, the very object of their enthusiastic worship. They worship the Lamb even as they worship him that sits upon the throne; and they say, "Worthy is the Lamb," because he was slain and redeemed his people by his blood. His atoning sacrifice is the great reason for their deepest reverence and their highest adoration. Some dare to say that the life of Jesus should alone be preached, and that no prominence should be given to his death. We are not of their religion. I am not ashamed of preaching Christ Jesus in his death as the sacrifice for sin; but, on the contrary, I can boldly say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." We do not so believe the doctrine of Atonement as to leave it in the dark as a second-rate article of faith but we hold it to be the first and foremost teaching of inspiration, the greatest well of the believer's comfort, the highest hill of God's glory. As our Lord's sacrificial character is in heaven most prominent, so would we make it most conspicuous among men. Jesus is to be declared as the sin-bearer, and then men will believe and live. May God the Holy Spirit help us in our attempt this morning!

I. Jesus in heaven appears in his sacrificial character; and I would have you note that **THIS CHARACTER IS ENHANCED BY OTHER CONSPICUOUS POINTS.** Its glory is not diminished, but enhanced, by all the rest of our Lord's character: the attributes, achievements, and offices of our Lord all concentrate their glory in his sacrificial character, and all unite in making it a theme for loving wonder.

We read that he is the Lion of the tribe of Juda; by which is signified the dignity of his office, as King, and the majesty of his person, as Lord. The lion is at home in fight, and "the Lord is a man of war: the Lord is his name." Like a lion, he is courageous. Though he be like a lamb for tenderness, yet not in timidity. He is terrible as a lion, "who shall rouse him up?" If any come into

conflict with him, let them beware; for as ho is courageous, so is he full of force, and altogether irresistible in might. He hath the lion's heart, and the lion's strength; and he cometh forth conquering and to conquer. This it is that makes it the more wonderful that he should become a lamb—

*"A lowly man before his foes,
A weary man, and full of woes."*

It is wonderful that he should yield himself up to the indignities of the cross, to be mocked with a thorn-crown by the soldiers, and to be spit upon by abjects. O wonder, wonder, wonder, that the Lion. of Juda, the offshoot of David's royal house, should become as a lamb led forth to the slaughter!

Further, it is clear that lie is a champion: "The Lion of the tribe of Juda hath prevailed." What was asked for was worthiness, not only in the sense of holiness, but in the sense of valour. One is reminded of a legend of the Crusades. A goodly castle and estate awaited the coming of the lawful heir: he and he only could sound the horn which hung at the castle gate; but he who could make it yield a blast would be one who had slain a heap of Paynim in the fight, and had come home victorious from many a bloody fray. So here, no man in earth or heaven had valour and renown enough to be worthy to take the mystic roll out of the hand of the Eternal. Our champion was worthy. What battles he had fought! What feats of prowess he had performed! He had overthrown sin; he had met face to face the Prince of darkness, and had overcome him in the wilderness; ay, he had conquered death, had bearded that lion in his den; had entered the dungeon of the sepulchre, and had torn its bars away. Thus he was worthy, in the sense of valour, on returning from the far country to be owned as the Father's glorious Son, heaven's hero, and so to take the book and loose the seals

thereof. The brilliance of his victories does not diminish our delight in him as the Lamb. Far otherwise, for he won these triumphs as a Lamb, by gentleness, and suffering, and sacrifice. He won his battles by a meekness and patience before unknown. The more of a conqueror he is, the more astounding is it that he should win by humiliation and death. O beloved, never tolerate low thoughts of Christ! Think of him more and more, as did the blessed Virgin, when she sang, "My soul doth magnify the Lord." Make your thoughts of him great. Be-greaten your Cod and Saviour, and then add to your reverent thoughts the reflection that still he looks like a lamb that has been slain. His prowess and his lion-like qualities do but set forth more vividly the tender, lowly, condescending relationship in which he stands to us as the Lamb of our redemption.

In this wonderful vision we see Jesus as the familiar of God. He it was who, without hesitation, advanced to the burning throne and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon it. He was at home there: he counted it not robbery to be equal with God. He is "very God of very God"; to be extolled with equal honour with that which is given unto the Lord God Almighty. He advances to the throne, he takes the book, he communes with Jehovah, he accepts the divine challenge of love, and unseals the mysterious purposes of his glorious Father. To him there is no danger in a close approach to the infinite glory, for that glory is his own. Now, it is he who thus stood on familiar terms with God who also stood in our place, and bore for us the penalty of sin. He who is greater than the greatest, and higher than the highest, became lower than the lowest, that he might save to the uttermost them that come to God by him. He who is Lord of all stooped under all the load and burden of sin. Fall down on your faces and worship the Lamb; for though he became obedient unto death, he is God over all, blessed for ever, the Beloved of the Father.

We observe, in addition to all this, that he is the prophet of God. He it was that had the seven eyes to see all things and discern all mysteries; he it is that opened the seven seals, and thus unfolded the parts of the Book one after another, not merely that they might be read, but might be actually fulfilled; and yet he had been our substitute. Jesus explains everything: the Lamb is the open sesame of every secret. Nothing was ever a secret to him. Ho foresaw his own sufferings; they came not upon him as a surprise.

*"This was compassion like a God,
That when the Saviour knew
The price of pardon was his blood,
His pity ne'er withdrew."*

Since then he has not been ignorant of our unworthiness, or of the treachery of our hearts. He knows all about us; he knows what we cost him, and he knows how ill we have repaid him. With all that knowledge of God and of man, he is not ashamed to call us brethren; nor does he reject that truth, so simple, yet so full of hope to us, that he is our sacrifice and our substitute. "He who unveils the eternal will of the Highest is the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."

Our Lord always was, and is now, acknowledged to be Lord and God. All the church doth worship him; all the myriads of angels cry aloud in praises unto him; and to him every creature bows, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things that are under the earth. When you call him King of kings and Lord of lords, lofty as these titles are, they fall far below his glory and majesty. If we all stood up with all the millions of the human race, and with one voice lifted up a shout of praise to him, loud as the noise of many waters and as great thunders, yet would our highest honours scarcely reach the lowest step of his all-

glorious throne. Yet, in the glory of his Deity, he disdains not to appear as the Lamb that has been slain. This still is his chosen character. I have heard of a great warrior, that on the anniversary of his most renowned victory he would always put on the coat in which he fought the fight, adorned, as it was, with marks of shot. I understand his choice. Our Lord to-day, and every day, wears still the human flesh in which he overthrew our enemies, and he appears as one that has but newly died, since by death he overcame the devil. Always, and for ever, he is the Lamb. Even as God's prophet and revealer he remains the Lamb. When you shall see him at the last, you shall say, as John did, "I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain."

Write, then, the passion of your Lord upon the tablets of your hearts, and let none erase the treasured memory. Think of him mainly and chiefly as the sacrifice for sin. Set the atonement in the midst of your minds, and let it tinge and colour all your thoughts and beliefs. Jesus bleeding and dying in your room, and place, and stead, must be to you as the sun in your sky.

II. In the second place, let us note that, **IN THIS CHARACTER, JESUS IS THE CENTRE OF ALL.** "In the midst of the throne, and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain." The Lamb is the centre of the wonderful circle which makes up the fellowship of heaven.

From him, as a standpoint, all things are seen in their places. Looking up at the planets from this earth, which is one of them, it is difficult to comprehend their motions— progressive, retrograde, or standing still; but the angel in the sun sees all the planets marching in due course, and circling about the centre of their system. Standing where you please upon this

earth, and within human range of opinion, you cannot see all things aright, nor understand them till you come to Jesus, and then you see all things from the centre. The man who knows the incarnate God, slain for human sins, stands in the centre of truth. Now he sees God in his place, man in his place, angels in their place, lost souls in their place, and the saved ones in their place. Know him whom to know is life eternal, and you are in the position of vantage from which you may rightly judge of all things. The proper bearings and relationships of this to that, and that to the next, and so on, can only be ascertained by a firm and full belief in Jesus Christ as the atoning sacrifice.

*“Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find,
The Holy, Just, and sacred
Three, Are terrors to my mind.
“But if Immanuel’s face appears,
My hope, my joy begins:
His name forbids my slavish fears,
His grace removes my sins.”*

In Christ you are in the right position to understand the past, the present, and the future. The deep mysteries of eternity, and even the secret of the Lord, are all with you when once you are with Jesus. Think of this, and make the Lamb your central thought—the soul of your soul, the heart of your heart’s best life.

The Lamb’s being in the midst, signifies, also, that in him they all meet in one. I would speak cautiously, but I venture to say that Christ is the summing up of all existence. Seek you Godhead? There it is. Seek you manhood? There it is. Wish you the spiritual? There it is in his human soul. Desire you the material? There it is in his human body. Our Lord hath, as it

were, gathered up the ends of all things, and hath bound them into one. You cannot conceive what God is; but Christ is God. If you dive down with materialism, which by many is regarded as the drag and millstone of the soul, yet in Jesus you find materialism, refined and elevated, and brought into union with the divine nature. In Jesus all lines meet, and from him they radiate to all the points of being. Would you meet God? Go you to Christ. Would you be in fellowship with all believers? Go you to Christ. Would you feel tenderness towards all that God has made? Go you to Christ; for “of him, and through him, and to him are all things.” What a Lord is ours! What a glorious being is the Lamb; for it is only as the Lamb that this is true of him! View him only as God, and there is no such meeting with man. View him as being only man, and then he is far from the centre: but behold him as God and man, and the Lamb of God, and then you see in him the place of rest for all things.

Being in the centre, to him they all look. Can you think for a moment how the Lord God looks upon his Only-Begotten? When Jehovah looks on Jesus, it is with an altogether indescribable delight. He saith, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” When he thinks of the passion through which he passed, and the death which he accomplished at Jerusalem, all the infinite heart of God flows high and strong towards his Best-beloved. He hath rest in his Son as he hath nowhere else. His delight is in Jesus; indeed, he hath so much delight in him, that for his sake he takes delight in his people. As the Father’s eyes are always on Jesus, so are the eyes of the living creatures and the four-and-twenty elders which represent the church in its divine life and the church in its human life. All who have been washed in his blood perpetually contemplate his beauties. What is there in heaven which can compare with the adorable person of him by whom they were redeemed from among men? All angels look that way, also, waiting his august commands.

Are they not all ministering spirits, whom he sends forth to minister to his people? All the forces of nature are waiting at the call of Jesus; all the powers of providence look to him for direction. He is the focus of all attention, the centre of all observation throughout the plains of heaven. This, remember, is as "the Lamb." Not as king or prophet chiefly, but pre-eminently as "the Lamb" is Jesus the centre of all reverence, and love, and thought, in the glory-land above.

Once more, let me say of the Lamb in the centre, that all seem to rally round him as a guard around a king. It is for the Lamb that the Father acts: he glorifies his Son. The Holy Spirit also glorifies Christ. All the divine purposes run that way. The chief work of God is to make Jesus the first-born among many brethren. This is the model to which the Creator works in fashioning the vessels of grace: he has made Jesus Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. All things ordained of the Father work towards Christ, as their centre; and so stand all the redeemed, and all the angels waiting about the Lord, as swelling his glory and manifesting his praise. If anything could enter the minds of heavenly beings that would contribute to lift Jesus higher, it would be their heaven to speed throughout space to carry it out. He dwelleth as a King in his central pavilion, and this is the joy of the host, that the King is in the midst of them.

Beloved, is it so? Is Jesus the centre of the whole heavenly family? Shall he not be the centre of our Church life? Will we not think most of him — much more of him than of Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or any party-leaders that would divide us? Christ is the centre; not this form of doctrine nor that mode of ordinance, but the Lamb alone. Shall we not always delight in him, and watch to see how we can magnify his glorious name? Shall he not be also the centre of our ministry? What shall we preach about but Christ! Take that subject away from me, and I

have done. These many years I have preached nothing else but that dear name, and if that is to be dishonoured, all my spiritual wealth is gone: I have no bread for the hungry, nor water for the faint. After all these years my speech has become like the harp of Anacreon, which would resound love alone. He wished to sing of Atreus and of Cadmon, but his harp resounded love alone. It is so with my ministry: with Christ, and Christ alone am I at home. Progressive theology! No string of my soul will vibrate to its touch. New divinity! Evolution! Modern thought! My harp is silent to these strange fingers; but to Christ, and Christ alone, it answers with all the music of which it is capable. Beloved, is it so with you? In teaching your children, in your life at home, in your dealing with the world, is Jesus the centre of your aim and labour? Does his love fill your heart? In the old Napoleon's days, a soldier was wounded by a bullet, and the doctor probed deep to find it. The man cried out, "Doctor, mind what you are at! A little deeper, and you will touch the Emperor." The Emperor was on that soldier's heart. Truly, if they search deep into our life they will find Christ. Queen Mary said that when she died they would find the name of Calais cut upon her heart; for she grieved over the loss of the last British possession in France. We have not lost our Calais, but hold still our treasure; for Christ is ours. We have no other name engraven on our heart but that of Jesus. Truly can we say,

*"Happy if with my latest breath
I may but gasp his name;
Preach him to all, and cry in death,
'Behold, behold the Lamb!*

III. Thirdly, our Lord is seen in heaven as the Lamb slain, and IN THIS CHARACTER HE EXHIBITS PECULIAR

MARKS. None of those marks derogate from his glory as the sacrifice for sin; but they tend to instruct us therein.

Note well the words: "Stood a Lamb as it had been slain." "Stood," here is the posture of life; "as it had been slain," here is the memorial of death. Our view of Jesus should be twofold; we should see his death and his life: we shall never receive a whole Christ in any other way. If you only see him on the cross, you behold the power of his death; but he is not now upon the cross; he is risen, he for ever liveth to make intercession for us, and we need to know the power of his life. We see him as a lamb "as it had been slain"; but we worship him as one that "liveth for ever and ever." Carry these two things with you as one: a slain Christ, a living Christ. I notice that feeling and teaching in the church oscillates between these two, whereas it should comprehend them both. The Romish church continually gives us a babe Christ, carried by his mother; or a dead Christ, on the cross. Go where we may, these images are thrust upon us. Apart from the sin of image-worship, the thing set forth is not the whole of our Lord. On the other hand, we have a school around us who endeavour to put the cross out of sight, and they give us only a living Christ, such as he is. To them Jesus is only an example and teacher. As a true and proper expiatory substitute they will not have him; BUT WE WILL. We adore the Crucified One upon the throne of God. We believe in him as bleeding and pleading: we see him slain, and behold him reign. Both of these are our joy; neither one more than the other, but each in its own place. Thus, as you look at the Lamb, you begin to sing, "Thou art he that liveth, and wast dead, and art alive for evermore." The mark of our Saviour is life through death, and death slain by death.

Note, next, another singular combination in the Lamb. He is called "a little lamb"; for the diminutive is used in the Greek; but yet how great he is! In Jesus, as a Lamb, we see great

tenderness and exceeding familiarity with his people. He is not the object of dread; there is about him nothing like "Stand off, for I am too holy to be approached." A lamb is the most approachable of beings. Yet there is about the little Lamb an exceeding majesty. The elders no sooner saw him than they fell down before him. They adored him, and cried with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb." Every creature worshipped him, saying, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto the Lamb." He is so great that the heaven of heavens cannot contain him; yet he becomes so little that he dwells in humble hearts. He is so glorious that the seraphim veiled their faces in his presence: he is so condescending as to become bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. What a wonderful combination of mercy and majesty, grace and glory! Never divide what God has joined together: do not speak of our Lord Jesus Christ as some do, with an irreverent, unctuous familiarity; but, at the same time, do not think of him as of some great Lord for whom we must feel a slavish dread. Jesus is your next-of-kin, a brother born for adversity, and yet he is your God and Lord. Let love and awe keep the watches of your soul!

Further, let us look at the peculiar marks of him, and we see that he hath seven horns and seven eyes. His power is equal to his vigilance; and these are equal to all the emergencies brought about by the opening of the seven seals of the Book of Providence. When plagues break forth, who is to defend us? Behold the seven horns. If the unexpected occurs, who is to forewarn us? Behold the seven eyes.

Every now and then some foolish person or other brings out a pamphlet stuffed with horrors which are going to happen in a year or two. The whole of it is about as valuable as the Norwood Gipsy's Book of Fate, which you can buy for twopence; but still, if it were all true that these prophecy-mongers tell us, we are not afraid; for the Lamb has seven horns, and will

meet every difficulty by his own power, having already foreseen it by his own wisdom. The Lamb is the answer to the enigma of providence. Providence is a riddle, but Jesus explains it all. During the first centuries, the Church of God was given up to martyrdom: every possible torment and torture was exercised upon the followers of Christ: what could be God's meaning in all this? What but the glory of the Lamb? And now today the Lord seems to leave his Church to wander into all kinds of errors: false doctrines are, in some quarters, fearfully paramount. What does this mean? I do not know; but the Lamb knows, for he sees with seven eyes. As a Lamb, as our Saviour, God and man, he understands all, and has the clues of all labyrinths in his hands. He has power to meet every difficulty, and wisdom to see through every embarrassment. We should cast out fear, and give ourselves wholly up to worship.

The Lamb also works to perfection in nature and in providence; for with him are "the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." This refers not merely to the saving power of the Spirit which is sent forth unto the elect; but to those powers and forces which operate upon all the earth. The power of gravitation, the energy of life, the mystic force of electricity, and the like, are all forms of the power of God. A law of nature is nothing but our observation of the usual way in which God operates in the world. A law in itself has no power: law is but the usual course of God's action. All the Godhead's omnipotence dwells in the Lamb: he is the Lord God Almighty. We cannot put the atonement into a secondary place; for our atoning sacrifice hath all the seven Spirits of God. He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him. Let us come to God by him. He has power to cope with the future, whatever it may be. Let us secure our souls against all threatening dangers, committing ourselves to his keeping.

How I wish I had power to set the Lord before you this

morning evidently glorified! But I fail utterly. My talk is like holding a candle to the sun. I am grateful that my Lord does not snuff me out; perhaps my candle may show some prisoner to the door, and when he has once passed it, he will behold the sun in its strength. Glory be to him who is so great, so glorious, and yet still the Lamb slain for sinners, whose wounds in effect continually bleed our life, whose finished work is the perpetual source of all our safety and our joy.

IV. I close with my fourth point, which is this: Jesus appears eternally as a Lamb, and IN THIS CHARACTER HE IS UNIVERSALLY ADORED.

Before he opened one of the seals this worship commenced. When he had taken the book, the four living creatures and the four-and-twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, and sung a new song, saying, "Thou art worthy to take the book." While yet the book is closed, we worship him. We trust him where we cannot trace him. Before he begins his work as the revealing Mediator, the church adores him for his work as a sacrifice. Jesus our Lord is worshipped not so much for what benefits he will confer as for himself. As the Lamb slain he is the object of heavenly reverence. Many will reverence him, I do not doubt, when he comes in his second Advent, in the glory of the Father. Every knee will bow before him, even of apostates and infidels, when they shall see him take to himself his great power and reign; but that is not the worship which he accepts, nor that which proves the offerer to be saved. You must worship him as a sacrifice, and adore him in his lowly character, as the "despised and rejected of men." You must reverence him while others ridicule him, trust his blood while others turn from it with disdain, and so be with him in his humiliation. Accept him as your substitute, trust in him as having made atonement for you: for in heaven they still worship him as the Lamb. That adoration begins with the

church of God. The church of God, in all its phases, adores the Lamb. If you view the church of God as a divine creation, the embodiment of the Spirit of God, then the living creatures fall down before the Lamb. No God-begotten life is too high to refuse obeisance to the Lamb of God. Look at the church on its human side, and you see the four-and-twenty elders falling down and worshipping, having every one harps and vials. Well may the whole company of redeemed men worship the Mediator, since in him our manhood is greatly exalted! Was ever our nature so exalted as it is now that Christ is made Head over all things to his church? Now are we nearest to God, for between man and God no creature intervenes: Immanuel—God with us—has joined us in one. Man is next to the Deity, with Jesus only in between, not to divide, but to unite. The Lord in Christ Jesus hath made us to have dominion over all the works of his hands; he hath put all things under our feet: all sheep and oxen, yea, the fowl of the air, and fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea. O Lord our God, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!

The Lord is adored by the church in all forms of worship. They worship him in prayer; for the vials full of sweet odours are the prayers of saints. They worship him in praise with a new song, and with the postures of lowliest reverence.

But, beloved, the Lamb is not only worshipped by the church, he is worshipped by angels. What a wonderful gathering together of certain legions of the Lord's hosts we have before us in this chapter! "Ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands." Their company cannot be enumerated in human arithmetic. With perfect unanimity they unite in the hallowed worship, shouting together, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain."

Nay, it is not merely the church and angelhood; but all creation, east, west, north, south, highest, lowest, all adore him.

All life, all space, all time, immensity, eternity: all these become one mouth for song, and all the song is, "Worthy is the Lamb."

Now, then, dear friends, if this be so, shall we ever allow anybody in our presence to lower the dignity of Christ, our sacrifice? [No."] A friend says, emphatically, No; and we all say, No. As with a voice of thunder, we say, No, to all attempts to lower the supreme glories of the Lamb. We cannot have it: our loyalty to him will not permit. Besides, no man will willingly lose his all. Take the Lamb away you take all away. "Who steals my purse, steals trash": who steals my Christ, steals myself, and more than myself— my hopes that are to be my future joys. Life is gone, when his death is rejected, his blood despised. Our souls burn with indignation when this vital truth is assailed.

*"Stand up, stand up for Jesus,
Ye soldiers of the cross!
Lift high his royal banner,
It must not suffer loss!"*

Wherever you are, to whatever church you belong, do not associate with those who decry the atonement. Enter not into confederacy with those who, even by a breath, would disparage his precious blood. Do not bear that which assails the Lamb; grow indignant at the foul lie! The wrath of the Lamb may with safety be copied by yourself in this case: you will be angry, and sin not.

Once more, if this be so, if the glorious sacrifice of our Lord Jesus be so much thought of in heaven, cannot you trust it here below? O you that are burdened with sin, here is your deliverance: come to the sin-bearing Lamb. You that are perplexed with doubts, here is your guide: the Lamb can open the sealed books for you. You that have lost your comfort, come back to the

Lamb, who is slain for you, and put your trust in him anew. You that are hungering for heavenly food, come to the Lamb, for he shall feed you. The Lamb, the Lamb, the bleeding Lamb: be this the sign upon the standard of the Church of God. Set that ensign to the front, and march boldly on to victory, and then, O Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world, grant us thy peace!

Amen.

TWENTY-EIGHT
GOLDEN VIALS FULL OF ODOURS

SERMON GIVEN ON MAY 19, 1872

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 5:8

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 18

*“Golden vials full of odours, which are the
prayers of saints.”*

REVELATION 5:8.

I SHOULD not have addressed you upon the subject of intercession today if this week had not been set apart for general prayer; for it is only a very few Sabbaths ago that I endeavoured to set before you the duty and privilege of intercession. However, as our mind is now directed to it again, it may be that the line upon line, the precept upon precept, the here a little and there a little, may not be without benefit to us.

The vision before us is a very remarkable one. We do not intend, for we have not the time, to go into all the details of it.

No doubt it is a vision referring to some special occasion, but at the same time we may regard it as descriptive of the usual worship which is offered before the throne of God and the Lamb. We have sometimes in continental galleries seen a mediæval painting representing the assembly of the great council of the ancient German Empire. There is the emperor surrounded by the various kings, princes, electors, dukes, and counts; yonder are the knights of the Golden Fleece; there are the bishops and the cardinals, the barons, knights, and burghers of various degrees making up a marvellous spectacle of pomp and pageantry. If we made minute enquiries we should, perhaps, discover the one particular Diet which the picture represented, but even without such investigation the painting is instructive. We know that if it represents the Diet on one occasion, the one might stand for all. And so in the great assembly of heaven, the outline which the seer of Patmos gives us here may, if we wish to be very accurate, be referred to some one particular event; but it will suffice for us to believe that it represents in general the homage which is rendered at the throne of the Eternal.

In considering the brilliant scene before us, note carefully that the worship described is not confined to the occupants of heaven's immediate courts. Moses Stuart, believing that we have here an entirely celestial scene, concludes that these "golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints," represent the intercessions of glorified spirits; and makes the remark that the saints in heaven still continue to pray. To this last statement I do not demur, for in the sixth chapter the souls under the altar are said to cry for vengeance, and I see no reason why the perfect saints above should not pray; but I very greatly question whether we can draw that inference from this particular passage, for the prayers here intended are not those of heaven only, since from the thirteenth verse we are taught that the scene represents the adoration of the Lamb by the

entire universe. "Every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." The presence angels lead the strain, the saints made perfect join the rapturous hallelujah, and then ten thousand times ten thousand angels swell the growing strain. Meanwhile, from every starry orb comes up its note of worship, the firmament rings with music. Earth from afar has heard the sound, and wakens all her life to take its part in the harmony; the fowls of the air, and the fish of the sea; the songsters of the wood, and the monsters of the deep render with zeal their tribute of grateful praise. 'Tis not the inner circle alone which thus resounds Jehovah's praise, but widening and widening, the praise encompasses all space, and fills immensity. Not heaven alone, but all creation yields the Lord his praise.

Now, dear brethren, let us by faith pass into the inner circle, draw near to the throne, and gaze upon the golden vials full of odours, for with these we have to do this morning. It is probably known to all of you that the idea conveyed to us, by "golden vials," is as far removed from the meaning of the Greek word as well could be, for a vial is to us generally a deep but narrow vessel, but the vessel here meant is both shallow and broad. A better rendering would be "golden bowls," or "golden goblets full of odours" or "full of incense, which are the prayers of saints." The idea is that each one of the twenty-four elders bears an open bowl or censer filled with smoking incense, which pours forth a sweet perfume before the Lord, and this is the symbol of the supplications of the people of God.

Leaving the figure, the thoughts before us are just these. The prayers of God's people are sweet as incense to him: secondly, their blended prayers are peculiarly acceptable in his

sight; and, therefore, thirdly, let us unite our supplications with the general prayer.

I. THE PRAYERS OF GOD'S PEOPLE ARE AS SWEET TO HIM AS INCENSE. This is not due to any natural excellence or merit which they possess in themselves and by themselves. Far from it. In the best prayer that was ever offered by the holiest man that ever lived, there was enough of sin to render it a polluted thing if the Lord had looked upon it by itself. When we approach nearest to the throne of grace, we still fall very far short of being where and what we ought to be. The sins of our holy things are alone enough to condemn us. We often come before God in prayer unfit to pray, and spoil the action in the very outset by unpreparedness of heart. At other times, when we are in the midst of devotion, when we are being upborne upon the wings of zeal, pride will intrude, and we congratulate ourselves upon the excellence of our worship. Alas! one dash of that spirit mars all: it is the Pharisaic spirit, and is the bane of devotion. At other times, just as our supplication is closing, we are assailed with suspicions as to the faithfulness of God, doubts as to the success of our pleas, or else some other unhallowed thought pollutes the sacrifice. Alas! how hard it is to begin, continue, and end a prayer in the Spirit. If any one of our prayers were put into the scales of the sanctuary alone, and of itself, the only verdict upon it must be, it is weighed in the balances and found wanting. No, my brethren, the prayers of the saints of themselves considered would rather be an offence unto divine holiness than a sweet savour unto God. Our consolation lies in this that our beloved intercessor who stands before God for us, even Christ Jesus, possesses such an abundance of precious merit that he puts fragrance into our supplications and imparts a delicious odour to our prayers. He makes our intercessions to be through his merit what they could not have been without it, acceptable before the Majesty of

heaven. I think it is Ambrose who uses a very pretty figure concerning believers prayers. He says we are like little children who run into the garden to gather flowers to please their father, but we are so ignorant and childish that we pluck as many weeds as flowers, and some of them very noxious, and we would carry this strange mixture in our hands, thinking that such base weeds would be acceptable to him. The mother meets the child at the door, and she says to it, "Little one, thou knowest not what thou hast gathered;" she unbinds this mixture and takes from it all the weeds and leaves only the sweet flowers, and then she takes other flowers sweeter than those which the child has plucked, and inserts them instead of the weeds, and then puts back the perfect posy into the child's hand, and it runs therewith to its father. Jesus Christ in more than motherly tenderness thus deals with our supplications. If we could see one of our prayers after Christ Jesus has amended it, we should scarce know it again. He has such skill that even our good flowers grow fairer in his hand; we clumsily tied them into a bundle, but he arranges them into a fair bouquet, where each beauty enhances the charm of its neighbour. If I could see my prayer after the Lord has prayed it, I should miss so much, and I should find so much there that was none of mine, that I am sure its fullest acceptance with God would not cause me a moment's pride, but rather make me blush with grateful humility before him whose boundless sweetness lent to me and my poor prayer a sweetness not our own. So then, though the prayers of God's saints are as precious incense, they would never be a sweet smell unto God, were it not that they are accepted in the beloved.

Note well, that true, acceptable intercession must be composed of the prayers of saints. "Golden goblets lull of the prayers of saints." Nothing is here said of the prayers of officials, hirelings, and functionaries. It is thought by some

churches most important that there should be kept up daily a repetition of certain words and sounds. This is not done by persons selected for their eminent spirituality or prevalence in prayer, but by officials whose appointment is arranged on very different principles. These persons are not qualified for the function in their ordinary dress, but derive some mystic qualification from garments more or less savouring of the bleaching and starch of the laundry. Then, having certain words before them, they have nothing to do but with appointed bowings and scrapings to go through them, and in going through them they believe they have offered unto God acceptable prayer. I have always been expecting to hear that before long praying to God would come to be managed by machinery. Our friends have for a considerable time praised God in that way, and a little inventiveness might surely arrange the same for prayer. There is scarcely now a place of worship dedicated to Christian worship, but what the most of the praise to God is done by an organisation of wind and pedals; sometimes with the addition of electricity, and doubtless it is quite as consistent, and I believe quite as acceptable to God too, that we commence to pray by wind, or water, or fire, or magnetism, or, better still, by steam. I cannot see why what is done in many cathedrals and churches by machines which eat bread and meat, could not equally be well done by engines consuming coals and coke. The making of sounds is a mechanical business, and needs only a little attention, and we might soon have a whole service performed by figures filled with clock-work. There is a certain note of the organ called *vox humana*, which certainly is amazingly like the human voice, and as long as you have no need of heart and soul, it cannot matter much whether the sound is made by the *vox humana* of an organ, or the real *vox humana*. The fact is, vocal prayers are nothing in themselves, whether they be said or sung, whether they be read or intoned; it is the

heart which alone prays acceptably. I cannot believe in a God who finds any satisfaction in the Ritualistic services which I have witnessed. I have asked myself, "What kind of a being must he be who could find pleasure in this sort of thing?" Thought is disgusted, reason sickened, intellect provoked, contemplation annoyed, only a florid taste and a childish love of display are gratified. The God of these Popish ceremonialists must surely be a huge, almighty doll-loving baby; but certainly not an intelligent being, such as Scripture reveals to us in the God that made heaven and earth. Alas, the frivolous sons of men imagine, because they go to their operas and listen to sweet music, and because in their drawing rooms they delight in the perfume which they scatter from their handkerchiefs, and because they are pleased to array themselves in silk and satin and the like, that God is like themselves, and is pleased with chants, and robes, and incense. Truly, the God they make is like themselves. They know not the Lord, the ever blessed. If he would be adored with glittering blue, look at the azure of the sky, or the deep blue of the sea; if he would be worshipped with lamps and candles, behold yon stars, and sun, and moon; if he would be revered with music, hark how the thunder rolls like drums in his awful march. Is the Infinite mind to be worshipped by vain shews? O ye sons of earth, will ye thus worship him that rideth on the heavens, before whom ye all are but as grasshoppers? The prayers which the Lord accepts are not the chantings of functionaries, the litanies of priests, or the devout tones of a mechanical service; they must be the prayers of saints: in the life, the character, the soul, the sweetness lies—the acceptance comes not unless they be the prayers of saints. And who are the saints? They are men whom the Lord has made holy by the power of his Spirit, whose nature he has purified, whom he has washed in the precious blood of Jesus, and so sanctified unto himself, whom he has filled with his Spirit, and

so set apart to his worship. These persons loving him, praising him, bowing before him with solemn awe, lifting their whole souls up in adoring love— these are they who can offer sweet incense; their thoughts, their desires, their longings, their confessions, their pleadings, their praises— these are sweet to God: this is music to him, this is perfume to his heart, delightful to his infinite mind, pleasant to his sacred spirit, for God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth, and after no other fashion is a spiritual God to be worshipped.

Then, in the matter of intercession, one of the most important things is the character of the person. If I live in constant sin, and then go and say, “Our Father, which art in heaven,” surely I might feel his hand closing my mouth, while I heard him say, “How canst thou speak so? How darest thou say ‘Hallowed be thy name,’ when thou dost constantly defile it? How canst thou say ‘Thy kingdom come,’ when thou wilt not submit to my rule, nor yield allegiance to my government? How darest thou mutter out before me the words ‘Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven/ when thou rebellest against my will, and settest up thine own will instead of mine?’” Such prayers, what would they be but an insult to heaven, instead of sweet perfume offered before the Most High! Ay, and note too, my brethren— and I would note it myself with deep solemnity— that even where the man who presents intercessory prayer is a child of God, yet, unless he maintains, in the power of God’s Spirit, his character as a saint, he will not preserve the prevalence of his prayers; for, though our heavenly Father does not hear our prayers because of any merit in us, yet it is written, “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.” If we turn aside from the Lord’s commands we shall lose power in prayer, and our petitions will cease to bring down answers of peace. It is certain

that every child of God who has watched it will know, that there is nothing which so weakens prayer as sin, and that to be a man like Elias, who can prevail with God upon Carmel, you must walk in the Lord's ways, for if you walk contrary to him he will walk contrary to you. In the golden bowls the sweet incense is not the prayers of hypocrites or formalists, but the prayers of saints. We must, by the Spirit's power, maintain the saintly character; we must walk apart from worldliness and covetousness; we must put aside uncleanness, anger, wrath, and every evil thing, or else we shall not be able to present unto the Lord such sweet odours as his soul delighteth in.

Note next, that these prayers must be compounded of precious graces, for they are compared to incense, and, as you know, the incense used in the temple was made up of divers sweet spices, compounded "according to the work of the apothecary." Stacte and onycha, and galbanum were mixed with pure frankincense, tempered together and beaten small. Now, in prayer, that which is sweet to God is not the words used, though they ought to be appropriate, and care should be taken with the language, which is as the golden bowl; but the sweetness lies not in anything perceptible to the outward senses, but in secret qualities, comparable to the essence and aroma of sweet spices. In the incense there lies a subtle and almost spiritual essence which is fetched forth from it by the burning coals which causes the latent sweetness to spread itself abroad till all around confesses its power. So it is in prayer. Beloved brethren, our prayers may be very comely in appearance, and, if printed, might read most correctly and appear to be the very paragon of devotion, but unless there is a secret spiritual force in them they are vain things. We must speak to God believing that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him. Faith must be a part of the savour of prayer. Now, I am not able to tell when I hear a brother pray

whether he prays in faith or not, any more than I might, with my eye, be able to tell whether what is presented to me as incense has in it the proper pungency; but God perceives the faith or the absence of it, and the prayer is received or rejected as the case may be.

So, too, in prayer there must be the true frankincense of love. How can I pray as a child to a father whom I do not love? If my heart be cold towards God my prayer will be frozen to death. There is need, moreover, of the grace of humility to be mixed, like precious stacte, with the other ingredients, for he who does not pray humbly will be no more justified than the Pharisee. There was much of this precious spice in the publican's prayer, when he dared not lift so much as his eyes towards heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Much of this ought to lie in every prayer.

But, I cannot stay to tell you what all the separate spices ought to be which are needful to make up the incense of an acceptable prayer; only let me remind you, that the incense of the temple was mingled "according to the art of the apothecary." Let us bless God that the Holy Ghost is the believer's apothecary. He it is who knows the proper quantity of each ingredient in prayer; how much of faith, how much of love, how much of repentance, how much of humility, there ought to be in every supplication. He helps each believer's infirmities, and makes for us a mixture of all choice graces, so that when we pray our pleadings are accepted as sweet incense, because they contain an harmonious amalgamation of all the things which are sweet to the Lord God of Sabaoth.

In passing onward, let us observe that this incense, in order to be accepted before God, must burn. It might be the best incense in the world, and well compounded, and put into the golden goblets, but it was never accepted by God till it was set on a blaze. Live coals must be taken from off the altar, and

applied to the spices, and then the clouds of the sweet smoke began to rise up towards heaven. Ah! brethren, herein many men's prayers fail. They are correct but cold, excellent but lifeless, they lack life, vigour, earnestness, fire. Some make up for this deficiency by noise and wild-fire, but it will not do; the Holy Spirit alone can give us true fervour. I confess that I have too often prayed in this pulpit, and have not used the holy violence which wins with heaven; and, in our prayer-meetings, I have heard excellent supplications which have failed only in this, that the living fire had never touched them. How often in the family we go through the usual petitions, praying for ourselves, and for the Church of God, and for the heathen, and so on, and then we go our way. We knelt down mechanically, and we continued there mechanically, and we rose up mechanically, and though the prayer was extemporaneous, yet I fear there is no more heart in it than if we had read it from a book. Remember well this truth, that neither extemporaneous prayer nor any other is of any use unless holy fire consume it. The live coals we must have. I have heard prayers made up of broken, fragmentary, ill-assorted sentences, but the man who presented them has been all alive, and I have blessed God and felt I could say, "Amen, amen, the Lord hear that brother's petition." Beloved, have you not gone to your closet and felt, "I have only one thing upon my mind, but oh, how heavily that weighs upon me! I could not construct an elaborate prayer if it were to save my life, for I am so distressed about that one thing;" but then, that one petition has poured forth from you with all your soul, and you have been heard concerning it. The Lord teach us to pray in earnest. May he send upon the continent of Europe, and upon America, and upon all the world at this time his own fire and the heavenly flame of his Spirit, the spirit of grace and of supplication, that saints may know how to pray, for we must have the fire with the incense.

Then the fire being with the incense, it was necessary for acceptance that it should ascend. If the wind had blown the smoke of the incense downward, scattering it to the right and to the left, it would have been an ill omen; but the incense was accepted with God, as it went straight up into the air, mounting till it seemed to join the clouds and lose itself. Brethren, our intercessions when they are sweet to God go straight up to him. Do your prayers always do that? Have you never prayed thinking, "Well, that is a very nice expression which I have used, my learned brethren will be pleased with that; my spiritual friends will be able to join in that; and they will think, 'What a spiritual man he is to pray as he is doing now.'" Ah, my brother, the smoke is blowing down, you see, blowing away towards man's nostrils, and not towards God. So much waste and only waste! The prayer which God accepts is offered to him alone. He who presents it cares not one atom who likes it or who does not like it; he is talking with his God, he is pleading with the Majesty unseen; he is very careless of the criticism of his fellow-creature; his only desire is to please the Lord. The prayers of the churches will never be accepted before God until they go straight up to him only, having respect to him who is invisible.

Now, the question returns, why are the prayers of saints so sweet to God? We reply, partly because they are the work of the Spirit of God. There is no acceptable prayer in the world but that which the Spirit of God has inspired. The Holy Ghost knows what the mind of God is, and he writes it upon the minds of God's people, "making intercession in the saints according to the will of God." Now, when God sees his own will reflected in the bosoms of his own children, he cannot but accept the work of his own Spirit.

The prayers of his saints are acceptable with him also because they are the pleadings of his Son. The saints are members of Christ's body, and, as they plead, Christ pleads in

them. The very strength of their pleading lies in this, that they urge his merits, and the Lord delights to be reminded of his Son's excellences; it is a theme that his soul delighteth in. You may ring that bell as long as ever you will: the Father will never weary of it. Tell him what his Son has done. Remind him of Gethsemane; bring up before the Father's mind the cross of Calvary; tell him of his promise to his Son, that he shall see his seed and have a full reward. You cannot by any possibility displease God by dwelling upon this topic. Hold him with it, yea, hold him with the resolution of a Jacob, and say, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me, for I plead the name and merit of thine only begotten Son." Everything about Christ is sweet to God, and because believers' prayers are full of Christ therefore are they sweet to God.

And, again, the prayers of the saints are sweet to God because they honour himself, and this they do in many ways: and first, they assert his existence. In prayer the people of God declare better than they could by any other means their sure belief that God is, for should we pray to One who has no existence? Our prayer to God, therefore, is our continual assertion that "The Lord he is God," "The Lord he is God." Our asking for special and particular mercies, and expecting them, is a declaration of our belief in a living God, a conscious God, an acting God, a God who is not asleep and far away, but who is near at hand listening to human voices and able to fulfil human desires. This, then, is very agreeable to God that we should believe and testify that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

What if I were to say that prayer is in itself essentially a doxology? It is an utterance of glory to God in his attributes. Do I ask him to bless me? Then I adore his power, for I believe he can. Do I ask him to bless me? Then I adore his mercy, for I trust and hope he will. Do I ask him to bless me because of such

and such a promise? Then I adore his faithfulness, for I evidently believe that he is truthful and will do as he has said. Do I ask him to bless me not according to my request, but according to his own wisdom? Then I adore his wisdom; I am evidently believing in his prudence and judgment. I say to him, "Not my will but thine be done," I am adoring his sovereignty. When I confess that I deserve to suffer beneath his hand, I reverence his justice. When I acknowledge that he doeth right evermore, I adore his holiness; and, when I humbly say, "Nevertheless, deal graciously with thy servant and blot out my transgressions," I am reverencing his grace. We do not wonder, therefore, that through Jesus Christ the prayers of the saints should be precious to God, since they are a homage to the Supreme of an eminently practical kind.

Brethren, after all, perhaps the best reason we can ever give why God loves to hear us pray, is one which comes home to our own hearts. You love to hear your own little children's talk. Now you know very well when your little girl wants a new dress, and you are well aware that your little boy needs fresh school books, there is no necessity whatever that Mary should inform you about her clothes, or that Master John should tell you about his books; for you know what they had need of long before they ask you: but you like them to feel their wants and to recognise that they are supplied by their father; and, therefore, you like to hear them express their desires. Sometimes you will stop a bit and say, "No, why should I give you this?" You set get them a pleading, because you like to hear their little prattling voices, and to have them put their little arms around your neck and overcome you with kisses. You let them believe that they master you with their pretty reasonings and fond embraces, and it is pleasant to you as well as to them. Now, our heavenly Father is far above us, and yet he bids us learn his character from our own feelings as parents. If we being evil know how to

give good gifts unto our children, how much more shall our heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him. The Lord declares that he dealeth with us as with sons; I know the next word is, "For what son is there whom his father chasteneth not?" but I do not believe that God's likeness to a father is limited to his chastening. The text cannot be so cross and crabbed as that Oh no, there is a likeness to a father in his hearing our cries. He loves communion with his people. The Lord loves to have the hearts of his children talk to him; he delights to hear them spread out their wants before him and order their case with arguments and prevail with them. Oh, then, never be slack in your pleadings which are pleasant to God as fragrant incense.

II. Now, secondly and briefly, **BLENDED PRAYERS ARE PECULIARLY ACCEPTABLE TO GOD.** "The prayers of saints." The prayers of a saint are sweet, but the prayers of saints are sweeter. I had many points here, but I think I must needs forego them all this morning for the sake of one. United prayers possess the power of harmony. In music there is melody in any one distinct note; but we have all recognised a peculiar charm in harmony. Now, the prayers of one saint are to God melody, but the intercessions of many are harmony, and to God there is much that is pleasing in the harmony of his people's prayers.

Let us turn the subject over a minute. No two children of God pray exactly alike. There is a difference of tone. If taught of God each one will pray graciously, but there will be in one prayer what there is not in another. If all the fruits of the garden be luscious, yet each one has its own special flavour. All the bells may be of silver, and yet each one will have its own tone. For instance, some brethren when they pray dwell very tenderly upon the dishonour done to God by sin; they pray as if they would break their hearts and weep at every other

sentence. "O God, the idols are placed on thy throne; Jesus is dishonoured, the law is broken, the gospel is despised." Such loving contrition for the sin of others wails itself out in soft, low notes of magic power. But, listen to others, and you will find their prayers pitched upon quite another key. The brother prays with full assurance that God's kingdom is established upon the mountains, where its foundation can never be removed; and, though the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing, yet surely God's kingdom and purpose will stand, and he will do all his pleasure. And as you hear such petitioning, shrill and clear like the sound of a trumpet, you feel that the voice of faith is both musical and prevalent. The man has no doubt as to God's triumphing; he is quite certain that the Lord's hosts will win the day, and he prays in that spirit. Now, if these varying tones are melted into one, what masterly harmony they make! Therefore, the Lord promises great things when two of us agree as touching anything concerning his kingdom. But, now comes in a third petitioner, and his tone of prayer differs from the other two. The same spirit of prayer is in him, but its voice varies. He prays in this way. Bowed down with a sense of awe in the presence of God, the God of all the earth, he seems to speak measuring out each word, and he cries, "O God, shall not the nations fear thee? Such an one as thou art, shall they not tremble in thy presence? Wilt thou not be king to them, O thou Creator and Preserver of all things?" Like the cherubim, he veils his face in the presence of the excellent glory, and your soul by his prayer is solemnly ushered into the presence of God, and laid prostrate there. But, mark yet this fourth man, whose prayer is of another mould;— he is familiar with the Lord: he seems to have merged his sense of the sublime in that of the condescending, and he speaks somewhat in this way: "O Lord, my Father, thou lovest the sons of men, wilt thou not come and meet thy prodigal sons who are coming

back to thee? Hast thou not given Jesus Christ to be a man, and bought men with thy precious blood? and wilt thou not come to them and press them to thy bosom, and make them thine?" As the brother calls on God he appears to come close to him and lay hold upon him, and say, "I beseech thee have mercy upon my fellow-men." Now, there is something blessed in both those prayers. I do not know which I prefer; but I do know, when I can get the blending of the two, the awe and the holy boldness, the familiarity and the sense of sovereignty, I find a double sweetness fill my heart. Ah, brethren, did you ever hear a prayer of that kind which moved the Lord's heart in the wilderness— I refer to the prayer of Moses, when he said, "If not, blot my name out of the book of life." This is the prayer of self-sacrifice, when the man feels, "I must have God-glorified; I must have these people saved; I would pawn my soul for it; I would lose myself if but this nation might be redeemed." That is grand praying— it is not all of us who can rise to it. If that were alone and the only prayer, it might grow monotonous, for it lacks compass; but, if you put all these prayers together which I have mentioned— the prayers of the tender and the prayers of the brave, the prayers of the awe-struck and the prayers of the familiar, the prayers of the importunate, the prayers of the self-sacrificing— then they fill the golden bowl full of sweet odours.

For my part, I love at prayer meetings to hear the prayers of the aged. There is a lack in our prayer meetings, and has been for some months, through the loss of one dear saint whose prayers used to be marrow and fatness to some of our souls on Monday evenings. The prayers of men on the verge of heaven are to us as angels to lead us also up to the gates of pearl. But, it is very pleasant to hear the prayers of young people also, even the very young, for as they talk before the Lord there is a charming simplicity and frankness too little found in others. And then, the prayers of men in middle life, full of experi-

mental trouble, or, on the other hand, overflowing with experienced joy. These have their peculiar aroma, and I believe God loves to see them all mixed in the golden bowls.

And, what if I add he would have his people with their various peculiarities put their prayers together. I, as a Calvinist, remark that our Arminian friends pray wonderfully Calvinistically. I can seldom perceive much difference between them and ourselves, but no doubt they do view more than we do some particular parts of truth; we, on the other hand, pay a higher regard to another part of truth. Now these various constitutions of Christians affect in some degree their prayers, and when they are blended they give a peculiar harmony of sweetness to the incense.

At this time it is delightful to ray thoughts to think that the prayers of different nationalities are being put into the golden bowl. Our French brethren always charm me when they pray. There is a tender, filial love, an affectionate gentleness which is most delicious. Our American friends, so bold and sanguine, also delight us with their confidence in God. Their prayers will balance somewhat the timidity of the French utterance. Then, our German brethren, with their deep thoughtfulness, and their habit of going to the bottom of things, how solidly they make supplication. So with all our brethren of many lands; what a choice amalgam they make. I have been present at prayer meetings, when I have heard the various nations pray, and my heart has been rejoiced, and I can conceive that to God there is a peculiar harmony in the blended prayers of the many peoples and tongues.

Look back and think of the prayers of all the ages as being in the golden bowl at this one time. The prayers of the apostles, the cries of the persecuted times, the wrestlings of the lonely ones of the Middle Ages, the moans from the valleys and mountains of Piedmont— the groans of our brethren during the

Marian persecution, the pleadings of Covenanters and of Puritans,— all in the golden bowl together, and all with the live coals upon them, coming up from the hand of the great covenant angel, who stands for them before the throne, pleading with God on the behalf of his people. Let us rejoice that the blended prayers of the church are very sweet to the eternal God.

III. And now, lastly, brethren, LET US BLEND OUR PRAYERS, however faulty and feeble they may be, with the general supplications of the period. If united prayer be sweet to God, and we are sure it is, O let us give him much of it. We cannot make God happier than he is in reality, for he is the infinitely happy God; but yet, if there be anything concerning which he expresses satisfaction, let us abound in it. O church of God, cry day and night unto him. If thy voice, O spouse, be sweet in his ears; if he saith, “Let me hear thy voice; let me see thy face, for sweet is thy voice and thy countenance is comely,” O turn not away thy face and let not thy voice be silent; but cry, and even in the night watches pour out thy heart like water before the Lord thy God.

We fail, I am afraid, we Dissenters, in devotion, very much because we do not value it aright. In the service of to-day, I believe the sermon to be a very important part; but I do not believe, as some do, that it is the all-important matter. I have heard friends say, “So-and-so will take the preliminary service,” as if our praying and singing were only a little preliminary affair to be got through, but the preaching was the great concern. But, my brethren, praying is the end of preaching; the preaching is only the stalk, the real ear is the devotion which we pay to God. Do let us see to this, and seeing God is pleased with prayer, offer it to him more and more; and remember that if we do so, we shall find a blessing in it ourselves. The more we pray, the more we shall want to pray; the more we pray, the

more we can pray; the more we pray, the more we shall pray. He who prays little will pray less, but he who prays much will pray more; and he who prays more, will desire to pray more abundantly. And, dearly beloved, remember that prayer is effectual with God. We want to see souls saved. Are we not getting weary of living in this world amongst so many who are going down to hell? Is it not terrible to think, that after all the church is doing, thousands are being lost every day? We ought to bestir ourselves for men's souls, and we cannot do better for them than by praying for them. Let us, therefore, bestir ourselves in prayer.

In the eighth chapter of the Revelation you will find that the great angel who stood before God with the golden censer in his hand, full of the prayers of the saints, held it up, and the smoke went up to God; but, after a while, when the incense was all burnt out, he took that golden censer and he filled it with coals from off the altar, and then you notice what he did; he emptied the golden censer out upon the earth, and there were voices and thunders and lightnings and earthquakes. Read the passage. Now, when the censer of God's church shall have been well filled with prayer, and that prayer shall have been presented to the Lord, he will begin to work, and that censer winch has been before God a weapon to prevail with him, shall then become against men a weapon to prevail with them. God will fill it full of coals, and pour it out upon the earth. His divine power shall then be seen. Then will come voices,—preachers here and there will rise; in the newspaper press, in the universities, in the public assemblies, there will be voices denouncing oppression, voices crying against priestcraft, voices preaching truth, voices declaring Christ. Then will come thunderings, for with the Gospel will go the voice of God, which is like thunder, louder than the voice of man. Then will flash forth lightnings, for the light of God's power and truth

will come forth with majesty, and men's hearts shall be smitten with it, and made obedient to it. And then shall earthquakes shake society, till the thrones of despots reel, till hoary customs are dashed in pieces, till the land that could not be ploughed with the gospel plough shall be broken up with secret heavings from the eternal God. We have but to pray. All things are possible to us. Pray, brethren. You have the key in the door of heaven, keep it there and turn it till the gate shall open. Pray, brethren, for prayer holds the chain which binds the old dragon. Prayer can hold fast and retrain even Satan himself. Pray. God girds you with omnipotence, if you know how to pray. May we not fail here, but may the Spirit of God strengthen us, and to God shall be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

TWENTY-NINE
HEAVENLY SINGERS AND
THEIR SONG

SERMON GIVEN ON JULY 14, 1889

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 5:8-10

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 39

*“And when he had taken the book, the four
beasts and four and twenty elders fell down
before the Lamb, having every one of them
harps, and golden vials full of odours, which
are the prayers of saints. And they sung a
new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take
the book, and to open the seals thereof: for
thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to
God by thy blood out of every kindred, and
tongue, and people, and nation; and hast
made us unto our God kings and priests:
and we shall reign on the earth.”*

REVELATION 5:8—10

THIS morning we had a picture of our Lord Jesus Christ appearing in heaven in his sacrificial character, being adored in that character, looking like a Lamb that had been slain, and being worshipped under that aspect in the very centre of heaven. I tried, as far as ever I could, to insist upon it that we must never hide the atoning sacrifice, that Christ, as the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, is always to be brought to the front, to be put foremost in our preaching and in our practice, too. In this verse, we go a step further. This blessed Lamb appears in heaven as the Mediator between God and men. At God's right hand was the book of his eternal purposes. None dared even to look upon it; it was hopeless that any creature should be able to loose the seven seals thereof. But there came forward this glorious Lamb, who had the marks of his slaughter upon him, and he took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. Thus he acted as Mediator, Interpreter, taking the will of God, and translating it to us, letting us know the meaning of that writing of the right hand of God which we could never have deciphered, but which, when Christ looses the seals, is made clear to us.

Jesus Christ, then, is seen as our sacrifice in the capacity of Mediator, and in that capacity he becomes the object of the adoration, first, of the Church, then of all the thousands and ten thousands of angels, and then of every creature that God has made. It would be too large a subject to take in all those hallelujahs; and, therefore, in speaking to-night I select only these three verses to set forth the song of the Church, the adoration of the Church of God, rendered to the bleeding Lamb as the Mediator between God and men.

I shall have only two divisions. First, *behold the worshippers hearken to their song.*

I. First, BEHOLD THE WORSHIPPERS; for, remember, that we must be like them if we are to be with them. It is a well-

known rule that heaven must be in us before we can be in heaven. We must be heavenly if we hope to sit in the heavenly places. We shall not be taken up to join the glorified choir unless we have learned their song, and can join their sacred harmony. Look, then, at the worshippers. You are not yet perfectly like them; but you will be, by-and-by, if you have already the main points of likeness wrought in you by the grace of God.

The first point about the worshippers is this, *they are all full of life*. I must confess that I should not like to dogmatize upon the meaning of the four living creatures; but still they do seem to me to be an emblem of the Church in its Godward standing, quickened by the life of God. At any rate, they are living creatures; and the elders themselves are living personages. Yet alas, alas, that it should be needful to say so trite a thing; but the dead cannot praise God! "The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day." Yet how many dead people there are in this great assembly to-night! If one, who had sufficient powers of penetration as to be able to detect the actions of the spiritual life of man, were to go round this crowd, "Ah! me," he would say, "take this one away, take that one away; these are dead souls in the midst of the living in Zion." I will not dwell upon this very solemn thought; but I wish the conscience of some here to dwell upon it when the service is over; you are dead people in the midst of life; you joined in the song just now, but there was no living praise in your singing. Prayer was offered by my dear brother Hurditch very fervently; but there was no living prayer in you. Do you know that it is so? If so, then take your right place; and God grant you enough life to know the absence of life, lest he should say of you, "Bury my dead out of my sight," and you should be taken away to the house appointed to the dead, since you cannot be allowed to pollute the gathering of living saints! Those in heaven are all full of

life; there is no dead worshipper there, no dull, cold heart that does not respond to the praise by which it is surrounded; they are all full of life.

And further note, that *they are all of one mind*. Whether they are four-and-twenty elders, or four living creatures, they all move simultaneously. With perfect unanimity they fall on their faces, or touch their harps, or uplift their golden vials full of sweet odours. I like unanimity in worship here. You remember the lines—

*“At once they sing, at once the pray;
They hear of heaven, and learn the way.”*

We used to sing that hymn when we were children; but is there always real unanimity in our assembly? While one is praising, is not another murmuring? While one is earnest, is not another indifferent? While one is believing, is not another an infidel? O God, grant to our assemblies here below the unanimity that comes of the One Spirit working in us the same result, for so we must be in heaven; and if we are not of one mind here below, we are not like the heavenly beings above! When little bickerings come in, when sectarian differences prevent our joining in the common adoration, it is a great pity. God heal his one Church of all her unhappy divisions, and any one church of any latent differences that there may be, that our unity on earth may be an anticipation of the unanimity of heaven!

Note, next, that as the heavenly worshippers are full of life, and full of unity, so *they are all full of holy reverence*. “When he had taken the book, the four living creatures and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb,” all reverently fell down before the Lamb. And in the fourteenth verse, after their song was over, and after the angels and the whole creation had

taken their turn in the celestial music, we read, "And the four living creatures said, Amen." It was all that they could say; they were overawed with the majestic presence of God and the Lamb. "And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever." They did not say anything then; they simply fell down and worshipped. It is a grand thing when, at last, we have broken the backs of words with the weight of our feelings, when expressive silence must come in to prove the praises which we cannot utter. It is glorious to be in this reverent state of mind. We are not always so; but they are so in heaven; they are all ready to fall down before the Lord. Do you not think that we often come into our places of worship with a great deal of carelessness? And while the service is going on, are we not thinking of a thousand things? Or if we are attentive, is there enough lowly worship about us? In heaven, they fall down before the Lamb; brothers, sisters, should not we serve God better if we did more of this falling down to worship the Lamb?

Note, next, that while they are all full of reverence, *they are all in a praising condition*: "Having every one of them harps." They did not pass one harp round, and take turns in playing it; nor was there one who had to sit still because he had forgotten his harp; but they had, every one of them, his harp. I am afraid those words do not describe all God's people here to-night. My dear sister, where is your harp? It is gone to be repaired, is it not? My dear brother, where is your harp? You have left it on the willow-tree, by the waters of Babylon, so you have not one here. I must confess that sometimes I have not a harp; I could preach a solemn sermon, but I could not so well render the praise. Our dear friend Hurditch seemed to have brought his harp with him to-night; I am glad he praised the Lord so many times for so many mercies. We do not always have our harps with us; but the living creatures and the elders had, all of them,

the apparatus for the expression of their holy joy, "having every one of them harps." Try to be like the spirits above.

But this is not all; *they are all ready for prayer*. In heaven there is prayer, we must correct the common mistake about that matter; and there is something to pray for. Although we do not ask the intercession of saints and angels,— that were far from Scriptural,— still, we believe that the saints do pray. Are they not crying, "O Lord, how long?" Why should they not pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, in earth, as it is in heaven"? They would understand that prayer better than we do. We know how God's will is not done on earth, but they know how it is done in heaven; and they could pray, "Thy kingdom come, for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever, Amen." How sweetly could their lips move over such words as those! Well, they, all of them, had "golden vials full of odours." Are we always furnished and prepared for prayer? This ought to be more easy than always to have a harp; but I am afraid that we have not always our golden vials full of odours; I do not know that they are golden vials at all, I am afraid that ours are of the earth, earthy. But in heaven they have golden vials, pure and precious, and they are full of odours. Sometimes, when you look into your prayer-box, my brother, you have to scrape the bottom to find enough perfume to make even a little incense; but to have our vials full of sweet odours, this is the state of mind in which we should be always. God bring us to that! We shall be getting near heaven, when we can always pray, and certainly near heaven when we can always praise.

*"Prayer and praise, with sins forgiven,
Bring to earth the bliss of heaven,"*

and make us ready to go up and share that bliss.

Now you see something of what these worshippers were. I

do but pause a moment to ask whether we are prepared to go there, whether we are like those who are there. Remember that there is but one place for us besides; if we do not enter heaven, to praise with those perfect spirits, we must be driven from the divine presence to suffer with the condemned. You are not willing to go to hell; will you not be in earnest to go to heaven? You recoil at the idea of "Depart, ye cursed!" Oh, why not even now accept "Come, ye blessed," while Jesus repeats his gracious invitation, "Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"? I wish that I were able to press this invitation upon you; but I do put it before you. In the name of Jesus, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world, I invite you to trust in him, and find your sins forgiven; and so doing, you shall be prepared to meet the Lamb who sits upon the throne, and there for ever to adore his sacrifice, while you enjoy the blessings that flow from it. May we all meet in heaven! It would be a dreadful thing if we could know the destiny of everybody here, and find, among other things, that some here will never see the gate of pearl except from an awful distance, with a great gulf fixed, of which gulf it is said, "They which would pass from hence to you, cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence." May we be on the right side of that gulf! Be on the right side of it to-night, for Jesus' sake!

II. Now, having thus spoken of the worshippers, I want you to HEARKEN TO THEIR SONGS. We must hearken our best in the short time that we have left. "They sang a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."

It is rather an unusual thing to take a hymn, and treat it

doctrinally; but, for your instruction, I must take away the poetry for a moment, and just deal with the doctrines of this heavenly hymn.

The first doctrine is, Christ is put in the front, the deity of Christ, as I hold. They sing, "Thou art worthy, thou art worthy." A strong-winged angel sped his way o'er earth and heaven, and down into the deep places of the universe, crying with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the book?" but no answer came, for no creature was worthy. Then came One, of whom the Church cries in its song, "Thou art worthy, thou art worthy." Yes, beloved, he is worthy of all the praise and honour that we can bring to him. He is worthy to be called equal with God, nay, he is himself God, very God of very God; and no man can sing this song, or ever will sing it, unless he believes Christ to be divine, and accepts him as his Lord and God.

Next, the doctrine of this hymn is that the whole Church delights in the mediation of Christ. Notice, it was when he had taken the book that they said, "Thou art worthy to take the book." To have Christ standing between God and man, is the joy of every believing heart. We could never reach up to God; but Christ has come to bridge the distance between us. He places one hand on man and the other upon God; he is the Daysman, who can lay his hand upon both; and the Church greatly rejoices in this. Remember that even the working of providence is not apart from the mediation of Christ. I rejoice in this, that if the thunders be let loose, if plagues and deaths around us fly, the child of God is still under the Mediator's protection, and no harm shall happen to the chosen, for Jesus guards us evermore. All power is given unto him in heaven and in earth, and the Church rejoices in his mediatorship.

But now, notice, in the Church's song, what is her reason for believing that Christ is worthy to be a Mediator. She says, "Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain." Ah, beloved, when

Christ undertook to be her Mediator, this was the extreme point to which suretyship could carry him, to be slain! And he has gone to the extreme point, and he has paid life for life. "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," was the sentence pronounced upon Adam. The second Adam has died; he has bowed his head to the sentence, he has vindicated the law of God, he has gone to the extreme length of all that his mediatorship could possibly demand of him, and this makes the redeemed lift up the song higher and higher and higher: "Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain." Jesus is never more glorious than in his death; his propitiation is the culmination of his glory, after all, as it was the very utmost depth of his shame. Beloved, we rejoice in our Mediator because he died.

Well then, notice, that they sing of the redemption which his death effected, and they do not sing of the redemption of the world. No, not at all: "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood *out of* every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." I am not going into a doctrinal discussion to-night. I believe in the infinite value of the atoning sacrifice; I believe that, if God had ordained it to be effectual for the salvation of many more, it was quite sufficient for the divine purpose; but those whom Christ redeemed unto God by his blood are not all mankind. All mankind will not sing this song; all mankind will not be made kings and priests unto God; and all mankind are not redeemed in the sense in which this song is lifted up to God. I want to know, not so much about general redemption, of which you may believe what you like, but about particular redemption, personal redemption: "Thou hast redeemed *us*." "Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for *it*" "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." My dear hearer, can you join in this song? It is all very well to say, "Oh, yes! we are all sinners; we are all redeemed." Stop, stop; are you a

sinner? Do you know it? Sinners are very scarce in London. "Why, there are millions of them!" say you? Yes, yes, yes; nominally, they will say so; but the *bond fide* sinner, who knows his guilt, is a scarce article.

*"A sinner is a sacred thing,
The Holy Ghost hath made him so."*

If there is a real sinner in this house to-night, she will be weeping at my Master's feet, washing those blessed feet with her tears. But as for your sham sinners— they are sinners enough, God knows; but they do not really believe that they are sinners. They have never done anything very wrong, nothing very particular, nothing very important, nothing to break their hearts about. Oh! you— why, you cannot even claim to come in among the sinners, you are a sham even there! But as for redemption, that redemption that redeemed everybody will not do you any good, for it redeemed Judas, it redeemed the myriads that are now in hell. A poor redemption that! The redemption that you want is the redemption that would fetch you right out from your fellow-sinners, so that you would be separated unto God, according to that word, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters."

A thing that is redeemed belonged originally to the person who redeems it; and the redeemed of the Lord always were his: "Thine they were," saith Christ, "and thou gavest them me." They always were God's. You cannot go and redeem a thing that does not belong to you. You may buy it, but you cannot redeem it. Now, that which belonged originally to God came under a mortgage through sin. We, having sinned, came under the curse of the Law; and though God still held to it that we

were his, yet we were under this embargo, sin had a lien upon us. Christ came, and saw his own, and he knew that they were his own. He asked what there was to pay to redeem them, to take them out of pawn. It was his heart's blood, his life, himself, that was required; he paid the price, and redeemed them; and we to-night sing, "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." He has, by redeeming us, separated us to himself, and made us a peculiar people, bought with blood in a special sense out of all the rest of mankind.

I could tell you a great deal about the universal bearings of Christ's redemption, in which I believe, and in the infinite value of that redemption, in which I believe; but I also say that there was, in the design of God, and in the work of Christ, a peculiar form of redemption, which was only for his own people, even as his intercession is, for he says, "I pray for them, I pray not for the world: but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine." Whatever some may think about it, there is a speciality and peculiarity about the redemption of Christ; and this makes the very highest note of the song of heaven, "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

So much about the heavenly hymn doctrinally.

Now about it *experimentally*: "Thou hast redeemed us to God." I have said, dear friends, that you cannot sing this song unless you know something of it now. Have you been redeemed? Has the embargo that was on you through sin been taken off you? Do you believe in Jesus Christ? For, every man who believeth in Jesus Christ has the evidence of his eternal redemption. Thou hast been bought back with a countless price if thou believest that Jesus is the Christ, and thou art trusting alone in him. That was their experience: "Thou hast redeemed us." They felt free; they remembered when they

wore their fetters, but they saw them all broken by Christ. Have you been set free? Have you had your fetters broken? Ask the question, and then let us pass on.

This redemption is the ground of their distinction: "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." I heard one, the other day, say of a certain minister, "Oh! we want another minister, we are tired of this man; he is always talking so much about the blood." In the last great day, God will be tired of the man who made that speech. God never wearies of the precious blood, nor will his people who know where their salvation lies. They do not, even in heaven, say that it is a dreadful word to mention. "Oh, but I do not like the word!" says some delicate gentleman. Your lordship will not be bothered with it, for you will not go to heaven. Do not trouble yourself; you shall not go where they sing about the blood. But, mark you, if you ever do go there, you will hear it over and over and over again: "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." How they will ring out! "Thou, thou, thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." How they will emphasize that pronoun, "*Thou*," and address the praise wholly to Jesus, and sound out that word with the full music of their harps, "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." They are not ashamed of the blood of Jesus up there.

It is this redemption that has made them kings. We cannot realize our kingship to the full here below; though we do in a measure. There is a poor man here, who has but one room to live in; he has no money in his pocket to-night, yet he is a king in the sight of God. There is one here, perhaps, who used to be a drunkard. He could not overcome the evil anyhow; he signed the pledge, wore the blue ribbon, and so on; but still he went back to the drink. By the grace of God he has got his foot upon it now, for he has a new heart and a right spirit. That man is a king; he is a king over his drunken habits. There is one here who used to have a very fierce temper. It was hard to live with

him; but Christ has made him a changed man, and now he is a king, ruling over his temper. It is a grand thing to be made a king over yourself. There are some, who have dominion over millions of others, who have never ruled themselves. Poor creatures! Poor creatures! Thank God, if he has given you the mastery of your own nature; that is a glorious conquest; yet this is only the beginning of what is in this song of heaven.

And then they say, "Thou hast made us priests." Oh, the poor creatures we have nowadays in the world, who cannot go to Christ except by a priest! They must go to a priest to confess their sins, and go to a priest to get absolution. We have priests not only in the Church of Rome, but elsewhere; we are sorry to see this accursed priestcraft coming in everywhere. Why, some of you people would like your minister to do all your religion for you, would you not? You take a sitting, and leave your religion to your minister. Christ has made every one of his people a priest, and every child of God is as much a priest as I am; and I am a priest certainly, a priest unto God to offer the spiritual sacrifice of prayer, and praise, and the ministry of the Word. But here is the peculiar joy of all Christians, that God has made them priests. If they do not use their priesthood here, I am afraid that they will never be able to use their priesthood before the throne of God with their fellow-priests. This is the melody of the heavenly song, "Washed in the precious blood, redeemed by that matchless price, we are now made unto our God kings and priests." Even on earth each saint can sing,—

*"I would not change my blest estate,
For all that earth calls good or great;
And while my faith can keep her hold,
I envy not the sinner's gold."*

Thus have I spoken of the song doctrinally, and experimentally; now let me speak of it *expectantly*.

There is something to be expected: "And we shall reign on the earth." When John heard that song, the resurrection-day had not yet come. These are the spirits before the throne, disembodied; they are expecting the day of the resurrection. When that day will come, who can tell? But when it comes, the dead in Christ shall rise first. Upstarting at the midnight cry, they shall quit their beds of dust and silent clay, and the saints that are alive and remain shall join them. I will not go into the details of that time; but then shall come a period of halcyon bliss. "The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished." Then shall be a time of the saints' reigning upon the earth. Their life shall be regal; their delights, their joys, and their honours, shall be equal to those of kings and princes, nay, they shall far exceed them. Do you and I expect to reign upon the earth? It will seem very odd to one who is very poor, obscure, perhaps ignorant, but who knows his Lord, to find that Christ has made him a priest and a king, and that he shall reign even on the earth with him, and then reign for ever with him in glory; but it would be more singular, it would be perfectly monstrous, if we were to assert of some persons, and of some here present, that they would reign on the earth. The man who lives for himself shall never reign on the earth. "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth;" not the men who, in their selfishness, trample down everybody else with iron heel. You shall not reign on the earth; you have lived here simply to hoard money, or to make a name for yourself, or to indulge your passions, or to revenge yourselves upon your fellowmen. You reign, sir? You? God's prison-house is the place for you, not a throne. But when he has made us meek, and humble, and lowly, and reverent, and pure, then we shall become fit to be promoted to this high calling of being priests

and kings for Christ unto God in glory, and even here on earth in the day that is coming.

I wish that everybody here would take to searching himself as to whether he is likely to be of that blessed number. Do you with joy accept Christ as your Mediator? Do you see clearly how worthy he is to be the Mediator? Have you been redeemed from among men? Have you been taken away from old associations? Have you broken loose from habits that held you a slave amongst the Egyptians? Have you come into a new society? Has God brought you into a new heaven and a new earth? Has he given you any measure of reigning power over yourself? Do you live as a priest, serving God continually? If you are obliged to keep on saying, "No, no, no," to all these questions, then what shall I say but "Come to Christ"? May you come to him to-night! May he to-night begin in you that blessed process that shall make you meet to be partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light, for Jesus' sake!

Amen.

THIRTY
JESUS, THE DELIGHT OF HEAVEN

SERMON GIVEN IN 1875

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 5:9-10

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 21

“And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”

REVELATION 5:9-10.

IF you want to know a man's character, it is well to inquire at his home. What do his children and servants think of him? What is the estimate formed by those who are always with

him? George Whitefield was once asked his opinion of a person, and his answer was very wise, for he replied, "I never lived with him." Beloved brethren in Christ, see what an estimate is formed of your Lord at home up yonder, where they know him best, and see him most constantly, and in the clearest light. They have discovered no faults in him. The angels who have beheld him ever since they were created, the redeemed who have been with him, some of them for thousands of years, have found no spot in him; but their unanimous verdict expressed freely in joyful song is, "Thou art worthy; thou art worthy; thou art worthy."

If you desire to know a man it will be well to find out what the best sort of people think of him, for the good opinion of bad men is worthless. "What have I done," said one of the Greek philosophers, "that you speak well of me?" when he found himself applauded by a man of evil character. A character that comes from men fitted to judge, who know what purity is, who have had their eyes opened to discriminate between virtue and its counterfeit—such a character is well worth having. One would not like to be thought ill of by a saint. We value the esteem of those whose judgment is sound, who are free from prejudice, and who love only that which is honest and of good repute. Now, beloved, see what your Lord is thought of in the best society, where they are all perfect, where they are no longer children, but are all able to judge, where they live in a clear light, and are free from prejudice, where they cannot make a mistake. See what they think of him. They themselves are without fault before the throne; but they do not think themselves worthy, they ascribe worthiness to Jesus only. None stood up to take the book from the open hand of the great King; but when they saw the Lamb do so they felt that it was his right to take that prominent and honourable position, and with one accord they said, "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to

open the seals thereof, for thou wast slain." You and I cannot have too lofty thoughts of Jesus. We err in not thinking enough of him. Let our estimate of him grow, and let us cry with Thomas, "My Lord and my God!" Oh, for great thoughts of Jesus. Oh, to set him on the highest imaginable throne in the conceptions of our soul, and to make every power and faculty of our manhood fall prostrate like the elders before him, while whatever of honour God may put upon us we cast always at his feet, and ever say, with heart and lip and act, "Thou art worthy, Jesus, Emmanuel, Redeemer, who hast purchased us by thy blood. Worthy art thou, worthy for ever and for ever."

It is to the estimate of the perfect spirits that I would call your attention. What think ye of Christ, ye glorified ones with whom we shall so soon unite? We have your answer in the words we have read. "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation: and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."

I. Notice first that the bright ones before the throne adore the Lord Jesus as WORTHY OF THE HIGH OFFICE OF MEDIATOR. They adore him as alone worthy of that office, for there was silence in heaven when the roll was held in God's hand, and the challenge was given, "Who is worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof?" Dumb were the four living creatures; silent were the cherubim and seraphim: in mute solemnity sat the four-and-twenty elders on their thrones. They put in no claim for worthiness, but by their silence, and their subsequent song when Christ came forward, they admitted that he alone could unfold the purposes of God, and interpret them to the sons of men. For I take it that one of the meanings of our Lord's taking the book into his hand was this: that he was the fulfiller of that mysterious roll so closely sealed.

He was come to unfold it, and by transactions in which he should hold the chief place, it was to be fulfilled. The key of the purposes of God is Christ. We do not know what the decrees of God may be until they are fulfilled; but we do know that of him and through him, and to him, are all things, and that everything will begin and end with Jesus, for he is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. He is the initial letter of all history, and he will be the “finis” of it when he shall give up the throne to God even the Father, that God may be all in all. As our Lord Jesus is the fulfiller, so he is the interpreter. He has been with the Father, and “No man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whom the Son shall reveal him.” He is the great interpreter to us of the mind of God. His Spirit dwelling in us takes of his things and shows them unto us, and in the light of the Spirit we see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. “No man cometh to the Father,” saith he, “but by me;” for no man can expound the Father to us or conduct us to the Father save Jesus Christ, the sole interpreter of the divine secret. And so I regard the expressions here as setting him forth as mediator, for he it is who stands between God and man. He is worthy to take the book in his hand on our behalf, and grasp for us the indentures of our inheritance beyond the stars. No one else can go in for us to the august presence of the Most High, and take the title-deeds of grace into his hand on our behalf; but Christ can do it, and taking it he can unfold it and expound to us the wondrous purpose of electing love towards the chosen ones. Stand back, ye sons of anti-Christ, with your brazen foreheads! How dare ye bring forward a virgin, blessed among women, and cause her very name to be defiled by styling her our intercessor before God? How dare ye bring your saints and saintesses and make these to mediate between God and men? “There is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.” The saints in heaven sing of him, “Thou art worthy”;

but they salute none else beside. They reserve no homage for any other intercessor or mediator or interpreter or fulfiller of the divine grace, for they know of no other. Unto him they give, and to him alone, the honour to go in unto the King on the behalf of the sons of men, and to take the book in his hand.

Notice carefully to what they ascribe this worthiness: — “Thou art worthy to take the book and open the seals thereof, for thou wast slain.” Now, the case stands thus. God has given to us innumerable blessings in the covenant of grace, but they are given upon a condition. There are two sides to a covenant. Jesus Christ is our representative and covenant-head, and the condition which as the mediator he had to fulfil was this— that in due time he would offer to divine justice an honourable amend for all the injury done to the honour of God by our sins. As mediator, our Lord’s worthiness did not merely arise from his person as God and perfect man: this fitted him to undertake the office, but his right to claim the privileges written in the Magna Charta which God held in his hand, his right to take possession for his people of that seven-sealed indenture lies in this, that he has fulfilled the condition of the covenant, and hence they sing, “Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain.” Not “Thou art worthy, for thou wast born on earth, and thou didst live a holy life,” but “Thou wast slain;” for he must render recompense to incensed justice and injured holiness, and that he did upon the bloody tree. Whenever we begin to talk about this, the believers in the modern atonement— which is no atonement, but a hazy piece of cloudland— say to us, “Oh, you hold the commercial theory, do you?” They know right well that we only use, because the Bible uses them, commercial expressions as metaphors; but I venture to say to them, “You may well assert that there is nothing commercial about your system, for the commercial value of a counterfeit farthing would be too much to pay for the atonement in which you

believe." I believe in an atonement in which Christ literally took the sin of his people, and for them endured the wrath of God, giving to justice quid pro quo for all that was due to it, or an equivalent for it: bearing, that we might not bear, the wrath that was due to us. Jesus himself really "bore our sins in his own body on the tree." "He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him there was a literal, positive, actual substitution of "the just for the unjust to bring us to God." No other atonement is worth the breath used in preaching of it. It will neither give comfort to the conscience nor glory to God. But on this rock our souls may rest without fear, and it is because of this that they sing in heaven, "Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain. Thou canst claim our absolution: thou canst take the Magna Charta of thine elect into thy hand, and unroll the covenant established with them of old. Thou canst reveal to us the sure mercies of David, for thy part in the covenant has been fulfilled; thy substitutionary death has made thy people heirs with thee." Fain would I fly yonder to join their song, but till then I'll lisp it forth as best I may, — "Thou art worthy to take the book and open the seals thereof, for thou wast slain."

II. Secondly, in heaven they adore the Lord as their REDEEMER. "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."

The metaphor of redemption, if I understand it, signifies this. A thing which is redeemed in the strict sense belonged beforehand to the person who redeemed it. Under the Jewish law lands were mortgaged as they are now; and when the money lent upon them, or the service due for them, was paid, the land was said to be redeemed. An inheritance first belonged to a person, and then went away from him by stress of poverty, but if a certain price was paid it came back. Now "all souls are mine" saith the Lord, and the souls of men belong to God. The

metaphor is used, and, mark, these expressions are but metaphors; but the sense under them is no metaphor; it is fact. Our souls had come under mortgage, as it were, through the sin committed, so that God could not accept us without violating his justice until something had been done by which he who is infinitely just could freely distribute his grace to us. Now, Jesus Christ has taken the mortgage from God's inheritance. "The Lord's portion is his people;" that portion was hampered till Jesus set it free. We were God's always, but we had fallen into slavery to sin. Jesus came to make recompense for our offences, and thus we return to where we were before, only with additional gifts which his grace bestows. In heaven they say "thou hast redeemed us;" and they tell the price, "thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." There lay the price, the sufferings and death of Jesus have set his people free from the slavery into which they were brought. They are redeemed, and they are redeemed unto God. That is the point: they come back to God as lands come back to the owner when the mortgage is discharged. We come back to God again, to whom we always and ever did belong, because Jesus has redeemed us unto God by his blood.

And please to notice that the redemption they sing about in heaven is not general redemption. It is particular redemption. "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." They do not speak of the redemption of every tongue, and people, and nation, but of a redemption out of every tongue, and people, and nation. I thank God I do not believe that I was redeemed in the same way that Judas was, and no more. If so, I shall go to hell as Judas did. General redemption is not worth anything to anybody, for of itself it secures to no one a place in heaven: but the special redemption which does redeem, and redeems men out of the rest of mankind, is the redemption that is to be

prayed for, and for which we shall praise God for ever and ever. We are redeemed from among men. "Christ loved his church and gave himself for it." "He is the Saviour of all men" — let us never deny that— "but specially of them that believe." There is a wide, far-reaching sacrificial atonement which brings untold blessings to all mankind, but by that atonement a special divine object was aimed at, which will be carried out, and that object is the actual redemption of his own elect from the bondage of their sins, the price being the blood of Jesus Christ. Oh, brethren, may we have a share in this particular, efficient redemption, for this alone can bring us where they sing the new song.

This redemption is one which is personally realised. Thou hast redeemed us to God. Redemption is sweet, but "thou hast redeemed us" is sweeter still. If I can but believe he loved me, and gave himself for me, that will tune my tongue to sing Jehovah's praise, for what said David? "Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness." He repeated that several times over, but it would never have been carried out unless he had said, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed out of the hand of the enemy." In vain he called upon others, their tongues were dedicated to their pleasures; but the redeemed of the Lord are a fit choir to magnify his name.

The pith of what I have to say is this: in heaven they praise Jesus Christ because he has redeemed them, — my dear hearer, has he ever redeemed you? Oh, says one, I believe he has redeemed everybody. But of what avail is that? Do not the great mass of mankind sink to perdition? If you rest upon such a redemption you rest upon what will not save you. He redeemed his own elect; or, in other words, he redeemed believers. "God so loved the world" is a text much cried up, but pray go on with it. How much did he love the world? "That he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not

perish." There is the specialty of it— "Whosoever believeth in him;" and if you do not believe in him neither have you part or lot in his redemption, you are slaves to sin and Satan, and so will you live and so will you die: but believing in the Lord Jesus you have the marks of being specially and effectually redeemed by him, and when you get to heaven this will be your song,— "Thou hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood out of every kindred, and people, and tongue." Blessed be God for this. Some of all sorts are saved, some of all colours, ranks, nations, and ages are saved; some of all conditions of education and morals, some of the poorest, and some of the richest are redeemed: so that when we all assemble in heaven, though we make a motley throng on earth, we shall constitute a united choir, having all our voices tuned to this one note, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain."

III. Thirdly, and briefly, in heaven they praise Christ, not merely as mediator and as redeemer, but as the **DONOR OF THEIR DIGNITIES**. They are kings and reign. We too are kings; but as yet we are not known or recognised, and often we ourselves forget our high descent. Up there they are crowned monarchs, but they say, "Thou hast made us kings." They are priests too, as we are now, every one of us. When a fellow comes forward in all sorts of curious garments, and says he is a priest, the poorest child of God may say, "Stand away, and don't interfere with my office: I am a priest; I know not what you may be. You surely must be a priest of Baal, for the only mention of the word vestments in Scripture is in connection with the temple of Baal." The priesthood belongs to all the saints. They sometimes call you laity, but the Holy Ghost says of all the saints, "Ye are God's cleros" — ye are God's clergy. Every child of God is a clergyman or a clergywoman. There are no priestly distinctions known in Scripture. Away with them! Away with them for ever! The Prayer-book says, "Then shall

the priest say." What a pity that word was ever left there. The very word "priest" has such a smell of the sulphur of Rome about it, that so long as it remains the Church of England will give forth an ill savour. Call yourself a priest, sir! I wonder men are not ashamed to take the title: when I recollect what priests have done in all ages— what priests connected with the church of Rome have done, I repeat what I have often said: I would sooner a man pointed at me in the street and called me a devil, than called me a priest; for bad as the devil has been, he has hardly been able to match the crimes, cruelties, and villainies which have been transacted under the cover of a special priesthood. From that may we be delivered: but the priesthood of God's saints, the priesthood of holiness, which offers prayer and praise unto God— this they have in heaven; but they say of it, "Thou hast made us priests." What the saints are, and what they are to be, they ascribe to Jesus. They have no glory but what they received from him, and they know it, and are perpetually confessing it.

Let our hearts sing with the redeemed— "All for Jesus, for all is from Jesus! All for Jesus, for Jesus has given us all we have." Let us begin that music here.

IV. Once again. They in heaven adore the Saviour as DIVINE.

I am not straining the words of my text at all, but keeping the whole passage before me. If you read the two chapters you will find that while they sing to God, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive honour and glory and power," they sing to the Lamb, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power and riches and wisdom." The ascriptions which are given to the Creator are also offered to the Lamb, and he is represented as sitting on the same throne. Mark carefully that the adoration which they give to him he does not resent. When John fell down to worship one of the angels he received an earnest

protest, "See thou do it not." Now, if the worship given to Christ had been wrong, the thrice holy Saviour would have exclaimed most earnestly, "See thou do it not"; but he intimates no objection to the worship, although it is freely rendered by all the intelligent beings before the throne. Depend upon it, my hearer, you never will go to heaven unless you are prepared to worship Jesus Christ as God. They are all doing it there: you will have to come to it, and if you entertain the notion that he is a mere man, or that he is anything less than God, I am afraid you will have to begin at the beginning and learn what true

Religion means. You have a poor foundation to rest upon. I could not trust my soul with a mere man, or believe in an atonement made by a mere man: I must see God himself putting his hand to so gigantic a work. I cannot imagine a mere man being thus praised as the Lamb is praised. Jesus is "God over all, blessed for ever." When we ever speak at all severely of Socinians and Unitarians you must not be surprised at it, because if we are right they are blasphemers, and if they are right we are idolators, and there is no choice between the two. We never could agree, and never shall while the world standeth. We preach Christ the Son of God as very God of very God, and if they reject him it is not for us to pretend that it makes no difference, when in fact it makes all the difference in the world. We would not wish them to say more than they believe to be true, and they must not expect us to say less than we believe to be true. If Jesus be God, they must believe it, and must worship him as such, or else they cannot participate in the salvation which he has provided. I love the deity of Christ! I preach his humanity with all my might, and I rejoice that he is the son of man; but oh, he must be the Son of God too, or there is no peace for me.

"Till God in human flesh I see,

*My thoughts no comfort find.
 The holy, just, and sacred Three
 Are terrors to my mind.
 "But if Emmanuel's face appear,
 My hope, my joy begins:
 His name forbids my slavish fear;
 His grace removes my sins."*

Now I have almost done, only this is the outcome of the subject. You see the opinion they have of Jesus in heaven. My dear friends, are you of the same mind with them? You will never go there till you are. There are no sects in heaven—no two parties. They hold the same views about Jesus there. Let me ask you then, are you of the same persuasion as the glorified saints? They praise Jesus for what he has done. It is very wonderful to my mind that when they are adoring the Saviour they seem to strike that one key: they praise him for what he has done, and they praise him for what he has done for them. They might have praised him for what he is, but in the text they do not. Now, this reason which has such sway in heaven is the very same which moves us here—"We love him because he first loved us," and as if to show that this kind of love is not an inferior love, the love of gratitude seems to be the very sum and substance of the love of heaven—"Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us." Can you praise him for redeeming you? Dear hearer, you have heard about Jesus hundreds of times. Has he saved you? You know there is a fountain filled with blood, which cleanses from all sin; has it cleansed you? You know he has woven a robe of righteousness which covers his people from head to foot: has he covered you with it? You will never praise him till that is the case, and you cannot go to heaven till you are ready for his praise. "Well, but I go to my place of worship." So you may; but that will not save you till you get a personal hold

on Christ for yourself. "My mother and father were godly people." I am glad they were: I hope they won't have an ungodly son. You must, however, have a personal religion—something done by Jesus Christ for you. Young woman over yonder, has Jesus Christ redeemed you from among the mass of the people; brought you out from your sins, and separated you to himself? Have you had the blood applied to your soul—the precious blood of sprinkling which speaks peace in the conscience? Time is flying, and you have been hearers month after month; will it always be so? Will you never cry unto God, "Lord, let me know thy redemption; let me have a share in the precious blood: let me be washed from my sins"? Recollect you must be able to praise him for what he has done for you, or else you are not of the opinion of those in heaven, and into heaven you cannot come.

It is clear from the song I have been reading that in heaven Christ is everybody and everything. Is Christ so with you? It is a solemn question to put to persons. Is Christ first and last and middle with you, top and bottom, foundation and pinnacle, all in all? He knows not Christ who does not know that Christ is all. Christ and company will never do. Christ is the sole Saviour, the sole trust, the one prophet, priest, and king to all who accept him. Is he everything to you? Ah, there are some who think they love Christ; they think they trust Christ; but if he were to come to their house he would have a seat at the far end of the table if they treated him as they treat him now. They give him part of the Sabbath-day: they were loafing about all the morning, they were only able to get here this evening, and even now they have not come to worship, but only out of curiosity. A chapter in the Bible—how long is it, young man, since you read one? Private prayer—ah, I must not go into that; it is such a sorry story that you would have to tell. If anybody said to you, "You are not a Christian," you would be offended. Well, I

will say it, and you may be offended if you like, but remember you should be offended with yourself rather than with me. If you offend my Lord I am not at all afraid of your being offended with his servant, and therefore I tell you, if Christ be anything short of Lord and King in your soul, Christ and you are wide apart. He must be in the front rank, Lord High Admiral upon the sea, and Commander-in-Chief on the land. He is not going to be a petty officer, to come in at your odd times to be a lackey to you. You must take him to be Head, Lord, and Master. Is it so with you? If not, you differ from those in heaven, for he is all in all to them.

Once more. Can you join with the words of our text and say, "He is worthy, he is worthy"? I hope there are many here who if they for a moment heard that full burst of song, "He is worthy," would join it very heartily, and say, "Ay, he is worthy." I seemed to-night when I was praying as if I could hear them sing, "He is worthy," and I could hardly restrain myself from shouting, "Well sing ye so, ye spirits before the throne! He is worthy!" If we were to loose our silence for a moment, and break the decorum which we have observed through the sermon, and with one unanimous shout cry, "Yes, he is worthy," I think it would be a fit thing to do. Jesus is worthy of my life, worthy of my love, worthy of everything I can say for him, worthy of a thousand times more than that, worthy of all the music and harps on earth, worthy of all the songs of all the sweetest singers, worthy of all the poetry of the best writers, worthy of all the adoration of every knee, worthy of all that every man has or can conceive, or can compass, worthy to be adored of all that are in the earth and under the earth, and in the sea, and in the heavens, and in the heaven of heavens. He is worthy. We say "worthy," because we cannot tell how worthy. I think these good singers in heaven desired to give to the Lamb his due, and then they paused, and said to themselves, "We

cannot give him the praise he deserves, but we know that he is worthy. We cannot pretend to give him what he is worthy of, but we will say he is worthy." Yes he is worthy. If I had fifty thousand lives in this poor body, he is worthy that they should all be poured out one after another in martyrdom. One should be burned alive, and another should be broken on the wheel, and another should be starved by inches, and another should be dragged at the heels of a wild horse, and he would deserve them all. He is worthy, and if we had all the mines of India— silver and gold and gems, the rarest treasures of all the kings that ever lived, if we were to give it all up to him, and go barefoot, he is worthy. And if, after having done that, we were to abide day and night in perpetual work without rest, all for his sake, and if each one of us were multiplied into a million, and all of us laboured so, he is worthy. Worthy. I would make every drop of dew sparkle with his praise, and every leaf in the forest bear his name. I would make every dell and every mountain vocal with adoration, and teach the stars, and teach the angels above the stars, his praise.

*"Oh for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer's praise!"*

Let time and space become one mouth for song, and all eternity sound forth that mighty word, "He is worthy." Do you feel that he is worthy? If you do not, you cannot be admitted where they sing that song, for if you could enter there you would be unhappy. Never hope to enter there until your soul can say, "I have rested in his blood, I am by it redeemed unto God, and the Redeemer is worthy; and I will bear witness of his worthiness till time shall be no more."

God bless you all, for Jesus' sake.

Amen.

THIRTY-ONE
THE KINGLY PRIESTHOOD OF THE
SAINTS

JANUARY 28, 1855

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 5:10

FROM: NEW PARK STREET PULPIT VOLUME 1

*"And hast made us unto our God kings and
priests; and we shall reign on the earth."*

REVELATION 5:10

Music hath Charms." I am sure sacred music has; for I have felt something of its charms whilst we have been singing that glorious hymn just now. There is a potency in harmony; there is a magic power in melody, which either melts the soul to pity, or lifts it up to joy unspeakable. I do not know how it may be with some minds; they possibly may resist the influence of singing; but I cannot. When the saints of God, in full chorus, "chaunt the solemn lay," and when I hear sweet syllables fall from their lips, keeping measure and time, then I feel elevated;

and, forgetting for a time everything terrestrial, I soar aloft towards heaven. If such be the sweetness of the music of the saints below, where there is much of discord and sin to mar the harmony, how sweet must it be to sing above, with cherubim and seraphim. Oh, what songs must those be which the Eternal ever hears upon his throne! What seraphic sonnets must those be which are thrilled from the lips of pure immortals, untainted by a sin, unmingled with a groan: where they warble ever hymns of joy and gladness, never intermingled with one sigh, or groan, or worldly care. Happy songsters! When shall I your chorus join? There is one of your hymns that runs—

"Hark! how they sing before the throne!"

and I have sometimes thought I could "hark! how they sing before the throne." I have imagined that I could hear the full burst of the swell of the chorus, when it pealed from heaven like mighty thunders, and the sound of many waters, and have almost heard those full-toned strains, when the harpers harped with their harps before the throne of God; alas, it was but imagination. We cannot hear it now; these ears are not fitted for such music; these souls could not be contained in the body, if we were once to hear some stray note from the harps of angels. We must wait till we get up yonder. Then, purified, like silver seven times, from the defilement of earth, washed in our Saviour's precious blood, sanctified by the purifying influence of the Holy Spirit—

*"We shall, unblemished and complete,
Appear before our Father's throne,
With joys divinely great."*

*"Then loudest of the crowd we'll sing,
Whilst heaven's resounding mansions ring
With shouts of sovereign grace."*

Our friend John, the highly favoured apostle of the Apocalypse, has given us just one note from heaven's song; we shall strike that note, and sound it again and again. I shall strike this tuning-fork of heaven, and let you hear one of the key notes. "And hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth." May the great and gracious Spirit, who is the only illumination of darkness, light up my mind whilst I attempt, in a brief and hurried manner, to speak from this text. There are three things in it: first, the Redeemer's doings—" and hast made us; secondly, the saints' honors—" and hast made us kings and priests unto our God;" and, thirdly, the world's future—" and we shall reign upon the earth."

I. First, then, we have THE REDEEMER'S DOINGS. They who stand before the throne sing of the Lamb—the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who took the book and broke the seals thereof—" Thou hast made us kings and priests unto our God." In heaven they do not sing

*"Glory, honor, praise, and power
Be unto ourselves for ever;
We have been our own Redeemers;
—Hallelujah!"*

They never sing praise to themselves; they glorify not their own strength; they do not talk of their own free-will and their own might; but they ascribe their salvation, from beginning to end, to God. Ask them how they were saved, and they reply, "The Lamb hath made us what we are." Ask them whence their glories came, and they tell you, "They were bequeathed to us by the dying Lamb." Ask whence they obtained the gold of their harps, and they say, "It was dug in mines of agony and bitterness by Jesus," Inquire who stringed their harps, and they will

tell you that Jesus took each sinew of his body to make them. Ask them where they washed their robes and made them white, and they will say—

*"In yonder 'fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins."*

Some persons on earth do not know where to put the crown; but those in heaven do. They place the diadem on the right head; and they ever sing—"And he hath made us what we are."

Well, then, beloved, would not this note well become us here? For "what have we that we have not received?" Who hath made us to differ? I know, this morning, that I am a justified man; I have the full assurance that

*"The terrors of law and of God,
With me can have nothing to do;
My Saviour's obedience and blood
Hide all my transgressions from view."*

there is not a sin against me in God's book they have all been for ever obliterated by the blood of Christ. and cancelled by his own right hand. I have nothing to fear; I cannot be condemned. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Not God, for he hath justified; not Christ. for he hath died. But if I am justified, who made me so? I say—"And hath made me what I am." Justification from first to last. is of God. Salvation is of the Lord alone.

Many of you are sanctified persons, but you are not perfectly sanctified, you are not redeemed altogether from the dross of earth; you have still another law in your members,

warring against the law of your mind; and you always will have that law while you tabernacle in faith; you never will be perfect in your sanctification until you get up yonder before the solemn throne of God, where even this imperfection of your soul will be taken away, and your carnal depravity rooted out. But yet, beloved, there is an inward principle imparted; you are growing in grace—you are making progress in holiness. Well, but who made you have that progress? Who redeemed you from that lust? Who ransomed you from that vice? Who bade you say farewell to that practice in which you indulged? Cannot you say of Jesus, "And hath made us!" It is Christ who hath done it all, and to his name be honor, and glory, and praise, and dominion.

Let us dwell one moment on this thought, and show you how it is that it can be said that Christ hath made us this. When did Christ make his people kings and priests? When could it be said, "And hath made us kings and priests unto our God?"

1. First of all, he made us kings and priests, virtually, when he signed the covenant of grace. Far, far back in eternity, the Magna Charta of the saints was written by the hand of God, and it needed one signature to make it valid. There was a stipulation in that covenant that the Mediator should become incarnate should live a suffering life, and at last endure a death of ignominy; and it needed but one signature, the signature of the Son of God, to make that covenant valid, eternal, and "ordered in all things and sure." Methinks I see him now, as my imagination pictures the lofty Son of God grasping the pen. See how his fingers write the name; and there it stands in everlasting letters—"THE SON!" O sacred ratification of the treaty; it is stamped and sealed with the great seal of our father in heaven. O glorious covenant, then for ever made secure! At the moment of the signature of this wondrous document, the spirits before the throne—I mean the angels—might have taken up the song,

and said of the whole body of the elect, "And hast made you kings and priests unto your God;" and could all the chosen company have started into existence, they could have clapped their hands and sung, "Here we are by that very signature constituted kings and priests unto our God."

2. But he did not stop there. It was not simply agreeing to the terms of the treaty; but in due time he filled it all—yes, to its utmost jot and tittle. Jesus said, "I will take the cup of salvation;" and he did take it—the cup of our deliverance. Bitter were its drops; gall lay in its depths; there were groans, and sighs, and tears, within the red mixture but he took it all, and drank it to its dregs, and swallowed all the awful draught. All was gone. He drank the cup of salvation, and he ate the bread of affliction. See him, as he drinks the cup in Gethsemane, when the fluid of that cup did mingle with his blood, and make each drop a scalding poison. Mark how the hot feet of pain did travel down his veins. See how each nerve is twisted and contorted with his agony. Behold his brow covered with sweat; witness the agonies as they follow each other into the very depths of his soul. Speak, ye lost, and tell what hell's torment means; but ye cannot tell what the torments of Gethsemane were. Oh! the deep unutterable! There was a depth which couched beneath, when our Redeemer bowed his head, when he placed himself betwixt the upper and nether millstones of his Father's vengeance, and when his whole soul was ground to powder. Ah! that wrestling man-God—that suffering man of Gethsemane! Weep o'er him, saints—weep o'er him; when ye see him rising from that prayer in the garden, marching forth to his cross; when ye picture him hanging on his cross four long hours in the scorching sun, overwhelmed by his Father's passing wrath—when ye see his side streaming with gore—when ye hear his death-shriek, "It is finished,"—and see his lips all parched, and moistened by nothing save the vinegar and the

gall,—ah! then prostrate yourselves before that cross, bow down before that sufferer, and say, "Thou hast made us—thou hast made us what we are; we are nothing without thee." The cross of Jesus is the foundation of the glory of the saints; Calvary is the birth-place of heaven; heaven was born in Bethlehem's manger; had it not been for the sufferings and agonies of Golgotha we should have had no blessing. Oh, saint! in every mercy see the Saviour's blood; look on this Book—it is sprinkled with his blood; look on this house of prayer—it is sanctified by his sufferings; look on your daily food—it is purchased with his groans. Let every mercy come to you as a blood-bought treasure; value it because it comes from him; and ever more say, "Thou hast made us what we are."

3. Beloved, our Saviour Jesus Christ finished the great work of making us what we are, by his ascension into heaven. If he had not risen up on high and led captivity captive, his death would have been insufficient. He "died for our sins," but he "rose again for our justification." The resurrection of our Saviour, in his majesty, when he burst the bonds of death, was to us the assurance that God had accepted his sacrifice; and his ascension up on high, was but as a type and a figure of the real and actual ascension of all his saints, when he shall come in the clouds of judgment, and shall call all his people to him. Mark the man-God, as he goes upward towards heaven; behold his triumphal march through the skies, whilst stars sing his praises, and planets dance in solemn order; behold him traverse the unknown fields of ether till he arrives at the throne of God in the seventh heaven, Then hear him say to his Father, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do; behold me and the children thou hast given me; I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course; I have done all; I have accomplished every type; I have finished every part of the covenant; there is not one iota I have left unfulfilled, or one tittle that is left out;

all is done." And hark, how they sing before the throne of God when thus he speaks: "Thou hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."

Thus have I briefly spoken upon the dear Redeemer's doings. Poor lips cannot speak better; faint heart will not rise up to the height of this great argument. Oh! that these lips had language eloquent and lofty, that they might speak more of the wondrous doings of our Redeemer!

*"Crown him! crown him!
Crowns become the Saviour's brow."*

II. Now, secondly, THE SAINT'S HONORS: "and hast made us unto our God kings and priests." The most honorable of all monarchs have ever been esteemed to be those who had a right not only to royal, but to sacerdotal supremacy—those kings who could wear at one time the crown of loyalty, and at another the mitre of the priesthood, who could both use the censer and hold the sceptre—who could offer intercession for the people, and then govern the nations. Those who are kings and priests are great indeed; and here you behold the saint honored, not with one title, or one office, but with two. He is made not a king merely, but a king and a priest; not a priest merely, but a priest and a king. The saint has two offices conferred upon him at once, he is made a priestly monarch, and a regal priest.

I shall take, first of all, the royal office of the saints. They are **KINGS**. They are not merely to be kings in heaven, but they are also kings on earth; for if my text does not say so, the Bible declares it in another passage: "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood." We are kings even now. I want you to understand that, before I explain the idea. Every saint of the living God, not merely has the prospect of being a king in

heaven, but positively, in the sight of God, he is a king now; and he must say, with regard to his brethren and himself, "And hast made us," even now, "unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign upon the earth." A Christian is a king. He is not simply like a king, but he is a king, actually and truly. However, I shall try and show you how he is like a king.

Remember his royal ancestry. What a fuss some people make about their grand fathers and grandmothers, and distant ancestors. I remember seeing in Trinity College, the pedigree of some great lord that went back just as far as Adam, and Adam was there digging the ground—the first man. It was traced all the way up. Of course I did not believe it. I have heard of some pedigrees that go back further. I leave that to your own common sense, to believe it or not. A pedigree in which shall be found dukes, marquises, and kings, and princes. Oh! what would some give for such a pedigree? I believe, however, that it is not what our ancestors were, but what we are, that will make us shine before God; that it is not so much in knowing that we have royal or priestly blood in our veins, as knowing that we are an honor to our race—that we are walking in the ways of the Lord, and reflecting credit upon the church, and upon the grace that makes us honorable. But since some men will glory in their descent, I will glory that the saints have the proudest ancestry in all the world. Talk of Caesars, or of Alexanders, or tell me even of our own good Queen: I say that I am of as high descent as her majesty, or the proudest monarch in the world. I am descended from the King of kings. The saint may well speak of his ancestry—he may exult in it, he may glory in it—for he is the son of God, positively and actually. His mother, the Church, is the Bride of Jesus; he is a twice-born child of heaven: one of the blood royal of the universe. The poorest woman or man on earth, loving Christ, is of a royal line. Give a man the grace of God in his heart, and his ancestry is

noble. I can turn back the roll of my pedigree, and I can tell you that it is so ancient, that it has no beginning; it is more ancient than all the rolls of mighty men put together; for, from all eternity my Father existed: and, therefore, I have indeed a right royal and ancient ancestry.

And then, again, the saints, like monarchs, have a splendid retinue. Kings and monarchs cannot travel without a deal of state. In olden times, they had far more magnificence than they have now; but even in these days we see much of it when royalty is abroad. There must be a peculiar kind of horse, and a splendid chariot, and outriders; with all the etceteras of gorgeous pomp. Ay! and the kings of God, whom Jesus Christ has made kings and priests unto their God, have also a royal retinue. "Oh!" say you, "but I see some of them in rags; they are walking through the earth alone, sometimes without a helper or a friend." Ah! but there is a fault in your eyes. If you had eyes to see, you would perceive a body-guard of angels always attending every one of the blood-bought family. You remember Elijah's servant could not see anything around Elijah, till his master opened his eyes; then he could see that there were horses and chariots round about Elijah. Lo! there are horses and chariots about me. And thou, saint of the Lord: where'er thou art, there are horses and chariots. In that bed-chamber, where I was born, angels stood to announce my birth on high. In seas of trouble, when wave after wave seems to go over me, angels are there to lift up my head; when I come to die, when sorrowing friends shall, weeping, carry me to the grave, angels shall stand by my bier; and, when put into the grave, some mighty angel shall stand and guard my dust, and contend for its possession with the devil. Why should I fear? I have a company of angels about me; and whenever I walk abroad, the glorious cherubim march in front. Men see them not, but I see them; for "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of

things not seen." We have a royal retinue: we are kings, not merely by ancestry, but by our retinue.

Now, notice the insignia and regalia of the saints. Kings and princes have certain things that are theirs by perspective right. For instance, Her Majesty has her Buckingham Palace, and her other palaces, her crown royal, her sceptre, and so on. But, has a saint a palace? Yes. I have a palace! and its walls are not made of marble, but of gold; its borders are carbuncles and precious gems; its windows are of agates; its stones are laid with fair colours; around it there is a profusion of every costly thing; rubies sparkle here and there; yea, pearls are but common stones within it. Some call it a mansion; but I have a right to call it a palace too, for I am a king. It is a mansion when I look at God, it is a palace when I look at men; because it is the habitation of a prince. Mark where this palace is. I am not a prince of Inde—I have no inheritance in any far-off hand that men dream of—I have no El Dorado, or Home of Prester John; but yet I have a substantial palace. Yonder, on the hills of heaven it stands; I know not its position among the other mansions of heaven, but there it stands; and "I know that if the earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, I have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Have Christians a crown too? O yes; but they do not wear it every day. They have a crown, but their coronation day is not yet arrived. They have been anointed monarchs, they have some of the authority and dignity of monarchs; but they are not crowned monarchs yet. But the crown is made. God will not have to order heaven's goldsmiths to fashion it in after-time; it is made already hanging up in glory. God hath "laid up for me a crown of righteousness." Oh, saint, if thou didst just open some secret door in heaven, and go into the treasure chamber, thou wouldst see it filled with crowns. When Cortes entered the palace of Montezuma, he found a secret chamber bricked up,

and he thought the wealth of all the world was there, so many different things were there stowed away. Could you enter God's secret treasure-house, what wealth would you see!" "Are there so many monarchs," you would say, "so many crowns, so many princes?" Yes, and some bright angel would say, "Mark you that crown? It is yours;" and if you were to look within, you would read, "Made for a sinner saved by grace, whose name was —;" and then you would hardly believe your eyes, as you saw your own name engraved upon it. You are indeed a king before God; for you have a crown laid up in heaven. What ever other insignia belong to monarchs, saints shall have. They shall have robes of whiteness; they shall have harps of glory; they shall have all things that become their regal state; so that we are indeed monarchs, you see; not mock-monarchs, clothed in purple garments of derision, and scoffed at with "Hail, king of the Jews;" but we are real monarchs. "He hath made us kings and priests unto our God."

There is another thought here. Kings are considered the most honorable amongst men. They are always looked up to and respected. If you should say, "a monarch is here!" a crowd would give way. I should not command much respect if I were to attempt to move about in a crowd; but if any one should shout, "here is the Queen!" every one would step aside and make room for her. A monarch generally commands respect. Ah! beloved, we think that worldly princes are the most honorable of the earth; but if you were to ask God, he would reply, "my saints, in whom I delight, these are the honorable ones." Tell me not of tinsel and gewgaw; tell me not of gold and silver; tell me not of diamonds and pearls; tell me not of ancestry and rank; preach to me not of pomp and power; but oh! tell me that a man is a saint of the Lord, for then he is an honorable man. God respects him, angels respect him, and the universe one day shall respect him, when Christ shall come to call him to his

account, and say, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." You may despise a child of God now, sinner; you may laugh at him; you may say he is a hypocrite; you may call him a saint, a Methodist, a cant, and everything you like; but know that those titles will not mar his dignity—he is the honorable of the earth, and God estimates him as such.

But some persons will say, "I wish you would prove what you affirm, when you say that saints are kings; for, if we were kings, we should never have any sorrows; kings are never poor as we are, and never suffer as we do." Who told you so? You say if you are kings, you would live at ease. Do not kings ever suffer? Was not David an anointed king? and was he not hunted like a partridge on the mountains? Did not the king himself pass over the brook Kedron, and all his people weeping as he went, when his son Absalom pursued him? And was he not a monarch when he slept on the cold ground, with no couch save the damp heather? O yes, kings have their sorrows—crowned heads have their afflictions. Full oft

"Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown."

Do not expect that because you are a king, you are to have no sorrows. "It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink." And it is often so. The saints get but little wine here. It is not for kings to drink the wine of pleasure; it is not for kings to have much of the intoxicating drink and the surfeits of this world's delight. They shall have joy enough up yonder, when they shall drink it new in their Father's kingdom. Poor saint! do dwell on this. Thou art a king! I beseech thee, let it not go away from thy mind; but in the midst of thy tribulation, still rejoice in it. If thou hast to go through the dark tunnel of infamy, for Christ's name; if thou art

ridiculed and reviled, still rejoice in the fact, "I am a king, and all the dominions of the earth shall be mine!"

That last idea, and I have done with this part of the subject. Kings have dominion. Do you know I am a fifth monarchy man? In Cromwell's time some said there had been four monarchies, and the fifth would come and overturn every other. Well, I never wish to do as they did; but I believe with them, that a fifth monarchy shall come. There have now existed four great empires, arrogating universal dominion, and there never shall be another world-wide monarchy until Christ shall come. Jesus, our Lord, is to be King of all the earth, and rule all nations in a glorious spiritual, or personal reign. The saints, as being kings in Christ, have a right to the whole world. Here am I this morning, and my congregation before me. Some persons say, "Keep to your own place and preach," and I have heard the advice, "Do not go out of your parish." But Rowland Hill used to say he never went out of his parish in his life; his parish was England, Scotland, and Wales, and he never went out of it. I suppose that is my parish, and the parish of every gospel minister. When we see a city full of sin and iniquity, what should we say? That is ours, we will go and storm it. When we see a street or some crowded area, where the people are very bad and wicked, we should say, "That is our alley, we will go and take it." When we see a house where people will not receive the gospel, we should say, "That is our house, we will go and attack it." We will not go with the strong arm of the law; we will not ask the policeman, or government to help us; but take with us "the weapons of our warfare," which "are not carnal, but spiritual, and mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds." We will go, and by God's Spirit we shall overcome. There is a town where the children are running about the street, uneducated; we will go and take those children—kidnap them for Christ. We will have a Sabbath school. If they are ragged

urchins who cannot come to a Sabbath school, we will have a ragged school. There is a part of the world where the inhabitants are sunk in ignorance and superstition: we will send a missionary to them. Ah! those who do not like missionary enterprise, do not know the dignity of the saint. Talk of India; talk of China; "it is mine," saith the saint. All the kingdoms of the earth are ours. "Africa is my washpot—I will triumph over Asia. They are mine! they are mine!" "Who shall bring me into the strong city?" Is it not thou, O Lord? God shall give us the kingdom of Christ. The whole earth is ours; and by the power of the Holy Ghost, Bel shall bow, Nebo shall stoop, the gods of the heathen, Budha and Brahma, shall be cast down, and all nations bow before the sceptre of Christ. "He has made us kings."

Our second point, upon which I shall be very brief, is, "He hath made us kings and PRIESTS." Saints are not only kings, but priests. I shall go to it at once, without any preface.

We are priests, because priests are divinely chosen persons, and so are we. "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." But we have that calling and election; we were all ordained to it from the foundations of the world. We were predestinated to be priests, and in process of time we had a special effectual call, which we could not and did not resist, and which at last so overcame us, that we became at once the priests of God. We are priests, divinely constituted. When we say we are priests, we do not talk as certain parties do, who say they are priests, wishing thereby to arrogate to themselves a distinction. I always have an objection—I must state it strongly—to calling a clergyman, or any man that preaches, a priest. We are no more so than you are. All saints are priests. But, for a man to stand up and say he is a priest, any more than those he preaches to, is a falsehood. I detest the distinction of clergy and laity. I

like scriptural priestcraft; for that is the craft or work of the people, who are all priests; but all other priestcraft I abhor. Every saint of the Lord is a priest at God's altar, and is bound to worship God with the holy incense of prayer and praise. We are priests, each one of us, if we are called by divine grace; for thus we are priests by divine constitution.

Then, next, we are priests, because we enjoy divine honors. None but a priest might enter within the vail; there was a court of the priests into which none might ever go, except the called ones. Priests had certain rights and privileges which others had not. Saint of Jesus! heir of heaven! thou hast high and honorable privileges, which the world wots not of! Hast thou ever been within the vail in communion with Christ? Hast thou ever been in the court of the Lord's house, the court of the priests, where he has taught thee, and manifested himself to thee? Hast thou? Yes, thou knowest thou hast; thou enjoyest constant access to God's throne; thou hast a right to come and tell thy griefs and sorrows into the ear of Jehovah. The poor worldling must not come there; the poor child of wrath has no God to tell his troubles to. He must not go within the veil; he has no wish to go: but thou mayest; thou mayest come to God's ear, swing the censer before the throne, and offer thy petition in the name of Jesus. Others have not these divine honors. Thou art divinely honored, and divinely blessed.

Then another remark, to finish up with, shall be, we have a divine service to perform; and as I want you all, this morning, to turn this chapel into one great altar—as I want to make you all working priests, and this the temple for sacrifice—hook earnestly at your service. You are all priests, because you love his dear name and have a great sacrifice to perform; not a propitiation for your sins, for that has been once offered, but a sacrifice this day of holy thanksgiving. Oh! how sweet in God's ear is the prayer of his people! That is the sacrifice that he accepts;

and when their holy hymn swells upwards towards the sky, how pleasant it is in his ears; because then he can say, "My hosts of priests are sacrificing praise." And do you know, beloved, there is one point in which most of us fail in our oblations before God? We offer our prayer, we present our praise; but how little do we sacrifice of our substance unto the Lord! I had thought this morning, seeing I desire to make you amazingly liberal, to have made this my text, "Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine;" and I had thought of showing that our substance was the Lord's, that we were bound to devote no small portion of it to him, and that if we did do so we might expect prosperity even in worldly business, for he would make our barns full and our presses burst with new wine. However, I conceive it to be needless to preach a collection sermon—I thought I would rather tell you about your honor and dignity, and then you shall just give what you like, for the only free-will I like, is a free-will offering. Suffer, ye beloved, a few words. God has said in his Word that you are to honor him with your substance. As a priest of the Lord, will you not sacrifice something to the Lord this day? Here we have a great object before us; we want more room for the crowds who come to hear the gospel. It seems important, when such a throng is gathered, that none should go away. Ought we not to bless God that they come? There was a time you were few indeed, and the cry was, "Who hath believed our report?" But God has given us great success, the ministry here has been blessed to the conversion of not a few souls; I have many cases, now in this chapel, of broken hearts and contrite spirits; doubtless, there are many more than I know of, and I believe the blessed Spirit will bring them out in due time. Oh! do you not grieve that any should have to turn away from the voice of the ministry—that any who

come here should have to go away, perhaps to spend the Sabbath in sin. You know not where they have to go, when they cannot get within these walls. The thing is, we have come to the resolution that this chapel should be enlarged, so that there should be accommodation for a larger number. Now, ye priests, sacrifice to the Lord. Let the priests build the house of Lord; let those who worship in the sanctuary take up the trowel today; let the mortar and the brick be laid, and let this house be once more filled with the glory of the Lord, and an abundant congregation.

III. Now, I have to close up with THE WORLD'S FUTURE. "We shall reign on the earth." I have not much time for this, and I dare say it is expected that I shall tell you about the millennium and the personal reign of Christ. I shall not at all, because I don't know anything about it. I have heard a great many people talk of it; and, if anybody shows me a book on the millennium, I say, "I cannot read it just yet." A good man has lately written a book on it, and a gentleman recommended it to me so strongly, that I could not but buy it out of courtesy; but I elevated it to the aristocratic region of library, in the higher ranks, and there it rests in quiet repose. I do not think myself capable of threading the labyrinths of the subject, and I do not believe the very respectable author can do it. It is a subject so dark, and I have read so many different views upon it, that it is all a phantasmagoria with me. I believe all the Bible says of a glorious future, but I cannot pretend to be a maker of charts for all time. Only this I gather as a positive fact, that the saints will one day reign on the earth. This truth appears to me clear enough, whatever may be the different views on the millennium. Now, the saints do not reign visibly; they are despised. They were driven, in old times, into dens and caves of the earth: but the time is coming when kings will be saints, and princes the called ones of God—when queens shall be the

nursing mothers, and kings the nursing fathers of Christ's church. The hour is coming when the saint, instead of being dishonored, shall be honored; and monarchs, once the foes of truth, shall become its friends. The saints shall reign. They shall have the majority; the kingdom of Christ shall have the upper hand; it shall not be cast down—this shall not be Satan's world any longer—it shall again sing with all its sister stars, the never ceasing song of praise. Oh! I believe there is a day coming when Sabbath bells shall sprinkle music over the plains of Africa—when the deep thick jungle of India shall see the saints of God going up to the sanctuary; and, I am assured that the teeming multitudes of China shall gather together in temples built for prayer, and, as you and I have done, shall sing, to the ever glorious Jehovah,

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

Happy day! happy day! May it speedily come!

Now, to close up, one very practical inference. Ye are kings and priests unto your God. Then how much ought kings to give to the collection this morning? Thus speak ye to yourselves. "I am a king; I will give as a king giveth unto a king." Now, mark you, no paltry subscriptions! We don't expect kings to put down their names for trifles. Then, again: you are a priest. Well, priest, do you mean to sacrifice? "Yes." But you would not sacrifice a broken-legged lamb, or a blemished bullock, would you? Would you not select the best of the flock? Very right, then select the very best of the Queen's coins, and offer, if you can, sheep with golden fleece. Excuse my pressing this subject. I want to get this chapel enlarged; so do you; we are all agreed about it; we are all rowing in one boat. I have set my mind on £50, and I must, and will, have it to-day, if possible. I hope you won't disappoint me. It is not my own cause, but my Master's—

at other times you have given liberally—I am not afraid of you—but hope to come forward, next Sabbath morning, with the cheering announcement that the £50 is all raised, and then I think my spirits will be so elevated, that, by the help of God, I will venture to promise you one of the best sermons I am capable of delivering.

REVELATION 7

THIRTY-TWO
THE MULTITUDE BEFORE THE
THRONE

SERMON #3403

SERMON PRINTED IN 1914

*“After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude,
which no man could number, of all nations,
tribes, people and tongues stood before the
Throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with
white robes, and palms in their hands, and
cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to
our God which sits upon the Throne, and
unto the Lamb.”*

REVELATION 7:9, 10

IT seems as though a dash of wonderment thrilled through his soul and a flame of admiration burst from his tongue, when John exclaims, “After this I beheld, and lo!” He had already seen much. His attention was fixed. His thoughts were strained. All of a sudden, then, a fresh scene breaks on his view

and he betrays his surprise. At what, you say? Evidently he was astonished that the vision was not yet complete. Ah, Brothers and Sisters! In order to understand the deep things of God, we need to be patient in our contemplation. Had John turned away his eyes, relaxed his study, or withdrawn his gaze from the marvelous panorama, he would not have seen the better part of his vision! As a Jew, when he had seen the twelve tribes pass before him, he might have been tempted to say, "It is enough! There is a remnant according to the election of Grace in Israel! Lord, Your servant is content! I would now open my eyes again to earth and forget these mysteries." This is what many have done practically when they have been looking at a Gospel Truth. They have not been desirous to see it all, though glad enough to see some part of the Truth of God which seemed to suit their prejudice—they have taken their eyes away from the excellent glory before they have seen the whole of the Truth, as though they were afraid of discovering too much, as though they were always glad not to learn anything beyond, for fear it would not square with what they had learned before! John, however, being patient and taught of God, continued to look—and when the august assembly of the 144,000 had passed before him, he saw a far greater multitude of the Gentile race and he heard from them a louder song than he had heard from the chosen multitude before, as they said, "Salvation to our God who sits upon the Throne and unto the Lamb." Be steadfast, then, you searchers into the Truths of God. Look long! Look earnest! Ask the Lord to let you see as much as you may. Then that petition being granted, comfort yourselves with this reflection, "What you know not now you shall know hereafter." Some things He will not tell you because you cannot bear them now, but let there be nothing hid from you because your interest flags and you do not wish to see it! Be willing to learn and let your eyes be open to see the whole of the Truth which

Jesus would reveal. Turning, then, to the vision described in our text, the first thing in it that we ought to meditate upon is—

1. THE GREAT CENTER OF THE HEAVENLY WORLD.

It seems that all the saints and angels that John saw surrounded one common rallying place—the Throne of God and of the Lamb. They were not broken up into groups, some of them considering this subject, and others investigating that. They were not divided into parties, some calling themselves by one name, and some by another. All in one group they stood, though their number was beyond all human count, and every eye was directed to one common object—yes, and every heart went with every eye—and every tongue sounded the same song, and that a song of adoration to the same One who was the center of all!

Does not this teach us that God is the very center of Heaven? We might have guessed this, for He is center of all the new creation. Even now all those that are born-again live in Him, inheriting all the blessings of eternal life in their union to Christ, and their fellowship with Him. From Him they derive all their light—to Him and upon Him they reflect all the light, again, giving all the glory unto Him from whom they received all the Grace. He who built Heaven, He who supports Heaven, He who chose every inhabitant in Heaven, He who fashioned every inhabitant for Heaven, He who bought every inhabitant of Heaven with His precious blood, He who is the Father of all and the Friend of all, may well be the center of all joy, of all observation, and of all worship in the eternal world!

Note, however, particularly, that the center of the heavenly worship is not God in the act of Creation, but God upon Divine Sovereignty too plainly, we have to encounter the objections of many who pronounce it a hard saying and ask “Who can bear

it?" That the Potter shall have power over the clay to do as He wills with each lump, that He should have mercy upon whom He will have mercy, and do as He wills with His own, grates harshly on their ears! I know it is because hearts are hard upon earth, for in that place where every heart is right with God, they are all too glad to let Him sway the scepter. This is the very crown of their song—"The Lord God Omnipotent reigns." His will is their supreme delight. They understand that His will, despotic as it may seem, and unquestioned by any creature, is a will of mercy, of tenderness, of wisdom, of holiness, and of truth! Therefore, they pay their adorations to Him as King of kings and Lord of lords. This is a peculiar subject of their joy—that God has a Throne, that He sits upon it and that He rules over all things, and all things do His bidding. The central thought of Heaven, then, is Divine Sovereignty.

You will remark that we are told there was also the Lamb upon the Throne—as if to teach us that even in Heaven, the glory of the reigning God, working all things according to the counsels of His will, were a sight all too bright even for those pure spirits, unless they saw side by side with Him the Substitute, the Lamb of God! They see Jesus still under the form of a Sin-Bearer, Jesus represented by the symbolic emblem of a Lamb, a Lamb that had been slain, Jesus the Sufferer, Jesus the Crucified, Jesus who once died for sin and has forever put it away by His blood. Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, how I love these two doctrines as I see them side by side—God, a Sovereign, makes me tremble—Christ, the Lamb, makes me rejoice with trembling! God, a Sovereign, overawes me! I take off my shoes, like Moses at the burning bush, but the Lamb has a voice that bids me draw near and have fellowship even with the God who is a consuming fire!

Oh, how much this ought to be the object of our thoughts on earth, seeing that it is the main object of their thoughts in

Heaven! We have often heard statements made by persons of what they mean to do in Heaven. I read in a biography the other day of one who had not told another person certain feelings of his, as he meant to tell them in the other world. Believe me, we shall have something better to do than discourse of trifles in that upper sphere! We may even dismiss that stanza of Dr. Watts—

“And with transporting joy, recount
The labors of our feet.”

It is but a poetic fiction! What are “the labors of our feet” that they should engross our attention? The reigning God will absorb our thoughts! How we can serve Him, the Supreme, will occupy our minds! The Lamb who once upon the Cross was slain, but now upon His Throne does reign—how we can make the universe resound with His praises, how we can fly at His bidding, if He wills, from world to world, and proclaim the matchless story of His love! How we may be able to make known to angels, principalities and powers in the heavenly places the manifold wisdom of God—this, it seems to me, will engross our attention far more than any of the trifling circumstances of time, or any of the occurrences that were connected with our pilgrimage here below! Oh, dear Brothers and Sisters, let us, while we are sojourning on earth, keep God upon the Throne uppermost in our hearts and so school ourselves in heavenly contemplation. Let us keep Christ uppermost with us in our meditations, in our conversations and in our actions. Let us be God’s men! Let us be Christ’s men! God upon the Throne, Christ the Lamb upon the Throne—let this be our central attraction. Let us count it to be our pleasure to live here, as it will be our superlative pleasure to live forever hereafter, as worshippers who do homage before the Throne of God and the

Lamb! We have seen the Divine Center, now, let us carefully mark—

II. THE DIVINE CIRCLE—the living throng that surrounded the Throne of God.

They are mentioned as “a multitude that no man can number.” This leads me to remark—although I cannot find words to fitly express the thought—that I will call it the sociality of God. He was God over all, blessed forever, self existent, independent, needing no creature to assist Him, or to add to His Glory or His happiness. But He chose to create worlds—how many we can never guess. The revelations of astronomy seem to tell us that He made them as lavishly as men might cast seed when they sow it broadcast over many acres. There they glitter in the expanse of space, and for all we know, every one of them filled with happy beings! We cannot tell. But God would not be alone. He willed not to be alone. He delighted in the habitable parts of the worlds that He chose to make. If you confine your view but to this world, you may discern that He would not be alone. He made this planet. He fitted it up to be the abode of living creatures. The Divine Being has been pleased to create all sorts and forms of beauty and of life—from the tiny animalcule that finds an ocean in a drop of water, up to the leviathan that makes the very deep to boil like a pot and causes the waves thereof to be hoary with his mighty lashings. God was pleased to make the eagle to fly aloft in the heavens and the fish to cut the deep. All these creatures He has fed for many generations. Upon all these He looks with interest and compassion. He hears the young ravens when they cry. What a boundless Creation! If every separate world that He has made has such an amazing catalog of life, what multitudes of creatures now cluster round about the great Eternal One! He dwelt alone, but

He chose not to be alone. And now He has built His house and filled His mighty chambers with many mansions into which He has been pleased to put a thousand forms of life. And then He said within Himself, "I will make a creature different from all the rest I have made as yet—it shall be a spirit that can converse with me—intelligent, immortal." And He created those first-born sons of light. I know not how many they may be, but our Covenant God, Father, Son, and Spirit formed servants suitable for the higher will and loftier behests in the cherubim and seraphim whom He made to be like flames of fire and who cheerfully flash to do His bidding. And then, last of all, He said—and here, the Divine Unity comes into counsel with itself—"Let Us make man after Our own image," and He made a strange creature, matchless and altogether unique—part of which was taken from the ground and kindred with the soil, which might die if it sinned, but another part of which was immaterial, fitted to tenant any of the spheres in the great universe and should exist forever—a spirit made in the image of God! So He made us and at this day, despite sin which seemed to rob God of all His newborn servants and sons, whom He had created in the loins of Adam, He has a multitude that no man can number, who are nearer to Him than even angels are, associates and friends with Christ, His Son, brought into union with Christ, married to Him. Is it not a marvelous subject if one could dive into it, this social Character of the Divine Being, that He willed not to be alone, that He still continues to constantly surround Himself with ten thousand times ten thousand spirits whom He ordains to bless? Oh, that I might be among them! Does not each one of you say so? Oh, that I might tread the courts of His house! To be but a hired servant within His gates might well content me, but oh, if I might be His son and as His child, might draw near to Him!—how would I bless that glorious Being from whom I sprang and into whose bosom

I would leap back again—the source of my life, the sum total of my bliss, my God, my All! Think that thought over another time. I leave it with you.

Another thought rises out of the text. If there shall be in Heaven a multitude surpassing all human arithmetic, out of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues, how certain the Gospel is to achieve yet a great success. We are always fretting. We are in a great hurry for results. We are impatient of the issue, for we cannot see how the Kingdom of God will come and gladly would we want to hasten the wheels of our Lord's chariot. Well, but our fears may be put aside and our disquietude may be allayed when we remember that as surely as Jehovah lives, Christ must see of the travail of His soul—and He shall see of it in the ultimate salvation of a number out of all nations that are beyond all human count! Patience, my Brothers and Sisters, patience, but diligence! Let us work at the same time that we wait. Let us serve, for the cause is in good hands. The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in the hands of Christ! He shall not have died in vain! He shall not lose the purchase of His blood! A countless multitude must be saved! As surely as He bought them, so surely will He wash them in the blood which He shed on their behalf! Perhaps the day of the Church's great growth will come when she returns to something like her primitive mode of warfare. Those who first went out to convert the world were but a handful of men—one room contained them all—yet within a few years there was not a nation upon earth that had not heard the Gospel! Even to the remotest isles the Truth of Jesus had been carried, and who were the men who carried it? Brothers, they were men who never framed a syllogism—men who never embellished a sermon with rhetorical art! For the most part, they were men who spoke only the language of the common people—spoke it, I doubt not, earnestly, but certainly not according to the lordly

rhetoric of the schools. They were not men who strove to be intellectual. They were not deep thinkers. They were not profoundly learned. They were men who knew but this one thing—that a Savior had come into the world and that they were intent to tell men about Him! They spoke of this and of this only in burning words with tender feelings and fervent appeals to the conscience. But now-a-days, indeed, we are told that the world is to be converted by logic! That it is to be reasoned out of its sins! That it is to be enlightened by the tapers of human intellect until the darkness of Hell shall be scattered! Believe me, we are on the wrong tack if we think this! It is not so! “Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts,” and the Spirit works with the simple Gospel, and only with the simple Gospel! When we get back to this conviction and return to this practice, we shall begin to see the countless multitudes flocking first to the Church on earth and afterwards to the Church above. I will ask you, my Brothers and Sisters here who have been converted, how were you saved? How were you converted? Was it by learning? Was it by the flash of some glorious speech of some mighty master of rhetoric? I confess that if I were converted to God—and I trust I was—it was through the ministration of a very simple, humble, uneducated man. I believe the confession of the most of God’s children will be such as gives the glory to the Gospel, and not to the preacher’s skill, art or intellect. If you have received comfort, and if you have received light, these things have come to you by the means of one who could not claim the glory, for he was but an earthen vessel—the excellence of the power was conspicuously of God and not of him! Oh, Spirit of God, bring back Your Church to a belief in the Gospel! Bring back her ministers to preach it once again with the Holy Spirit, and not striving after wit and learning. Then shall we see Your arm made bare, O God, in the eyes of all the people, and the myriads shall be

brought to rally round the Throne of God and the Lamb! The Gospel must succeed! It shall succeed! It cannot be prevented from succeeding—a multitude that no man can number must be saved!

Kindly allow me to continue on the same point the Divine circle in Heaven. Notice the variety. “Out of every nation and tribe, and people, and tongue.” How did John know that? I suppose as he looked at them, he could tell where they come from. There is individuality in Heaven, depend upon it! Every seed will have its own body. There will sit down in Heaven not three unknown patriarchs, but Abraham—you will know him! Isaac—you will know him! And Jacob—you will know him! There will be in Heaven not a company of persons, all struck off alike so that you cannot tell who is who, but they will be out of every nation, and tribe, and people, and tongue. I say not that they will speak the language they spoke on earth, but I do say that there will be certain idiosyncrasies and peculiar marks about them that will permit the onlooker to know, as John knew, that they are not all of one nation, but of all nations, tribes, people and tongues. I like this. The very charm of nature is its variety. If all flowers were alike, where were the glorious crown of summer? And if all bodies in the Resurrection world, or even all spirits in the disembodied state could all be precisely one like another, the very beauty of Heaven would be extinct in a degree. No, there they are from different tribes, nations, peoples and tongues—and this betokens individuality and gives us hope that we shall know each other in Heaven even as we are known!

Yet a unity about them, for they all wore white robes, and they all carried palms, and they all sang the same song. There are twelve gates to the New Jerusalem, but they all lead to the same city, and there is the same center. There were twelve foundations, but they were all laid on the one Foundation. So

they may be many views and notions of truth that we may hold, but they must all be bottomed on Christ Jesus and founded there. And if they are, we shall all meet in the better land. There is a variety in Heaven, yet there is a unity of experience, and a unity in the gratitude they feel. May you and I be there to help to increase the variety and to certify the unity of the heavenly throng! And now for a few words of running comment on the description given of—

III. THE SACRED COMPANY, THEM-
SELVES, *which will supply us with a third
point.*

They “stood before the Throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.” That they stood is not meant to teach us that they do not sit or rest in Heaven, for they always rest in Heaven. But they stand—that is to say—they are confirmed, they are established, they are secure. Their feet shall never slide. They stand in no slippery places. They stand before the Throne of God! It is the posture of action—they stand like soldiers ready for the march—like servants who but need to have it said to them, “Go,” and they go. Oh, that we could on earth realize this posture of Heaven! The Lord hold us up that we may stand—may our feet never slide—and oh, that we might stand with loins girt ready for whatever He shall bid us do! Alas, we need often to shake ourselves, for we lie upon the bed of sloth and we are given to slumber. If we would be like those who see His face, we should always stand and watch, that whatever the Master says to us, we would be ready to obey.

That they stood “before the Throne” shows that they are in the immediate Presence of God. They are not excluded from His Presence, they are not at a distance, but they behold His

Glory to peculiar advantage and He is near to them in a remarkably gracious and glorious manner. They stand before the Throne of God. Yes, and this is the charm of Heaven, to dwell in the Presence of God! You have tasted, then, something of what Heaven means, my dear Brothers and Sisters. Sometimes you have been near to Christ and in full fellowship with Him you have sipped of the golden cup from which you shall drink forever! You have tasted of immortal fruit that shall furnish your everlasting food. This is Heaven—forever to behold His face, forever to stand like a courtier in the very court, itself, like a favorite before the Throne—not in the outer courts—not in the court of the Gentiles, but inside the veil, before the Throne, within the glorious mystery, the sanctum sanctorum, in the Holy of Holies, right where God, Himself, is! There shall we stand forever and forever!

That they were “clothed with white robes” is not a little significant. Nakedness was revealed to man by sin. Before the time when he sinned, he was naked and not ashamed. But then he strove to make himself a dress and the fig leaf was the result. But Christ has come in and clothed us—clothed us completely. The robes spoken of here seem to have covered them from head to foot. They were “clothed with white robes”—not partly clad, but altogether clad in them. Oh, how comely that righteousness of Christ which He has worked for us, and worked in us where-with we shall be clothed when we stand before the eternal Throne of God! Brothers and Sisters, rejoice to put it on tonight! Rejoice to feel that His blood and righteousness, even now—

“Your beauty are your glorious dress.”

Anticipate the time when you shall be admired of men and of angels, attired in that complete garment. These robes are said

to be “white robes”—white to indicate purity—and “they are without fault before the Throne of God.” White—as distinctive of their priestly order, “for they are kings and priests unto God forever and ever.” White—as an emblem of triumph, for now they are victors over every foe.

But why and how came those robes to be white? Their robes are white because His robes were red—His robes I say. Oh, how the angels gazed with astonishment, and asked with eagerness, as they saw Him come back from Calvary, “Why are Your garments red? Why are You red in Your apparel as one that has trodden the winepress?” And He answered, “I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with Me.” Because the Savior bled and dyed His garments with His own blood for us, therefore, filthy as the saints’ garments once were, they are now robed in pure immaculate white, whiter than any fuller could make them, glistening like the sun!

Oh, the joy of being there! May it soon come to us! It will! It may come now, while yet we are talking here—

“Soon may the hand be stretched
And dumb the mouth that lisps this faltering
strain.”

But if it were so, then sudden death would be sudden glory! Are you sure, each one of you, that it would be so? Would your departure out of this life be your entrance into the eternal life? Would the shutting of these poor eyes be the opening of nobler optics upon a brighter scene? Believer, it would be so with you! Then why are you afraid to die? No, rather, be willing at any time to gather up your feet into the bed and die—your father’s God to meet—where the white robed company see His face!

To complete the description, we will only remark that the palms in their hands may refer to their observing that great

feast of the Lord, the feast of tabernacles, when the harvest of the earth is complete, when the sabbathism that remains to the people of God is attained and the pleasures which are at God's right hand forevermore are realized—for so of old it was ordained, as we read in Leviticus—that at this festival the Israelites should take palm branches in their hands and rejoice before the Lord their God. This seems to have been the acme of felicity in their sacred year.

I wish I had the power to describe this glorious circle—those bright ones before the Throne, that you could see them! I think, as I look upon them, that I can see even now the Apostolic band. I mark the goodly fellowship of the Prophets. I think I see the martyrs with their ruby crowns. Do not I see the ministers and confessors of Christ, some of my own kith and kin that have gone before me—the Covenanters who bled in Scotland, and the heroes of Smithfield? There they stand, and listen!—how they sing! None shall excel them in their song of praise. You have a mother there, perhaps—a sister, or a brother, or your grandfather who, years ago “went over to the majority” to sing among that countless multitude. Oh, if I could but have a vision of all that will be there within the next hundred years, would I see myself, and would I see all this company there? Oh, if it were possible, I would gladly translate you all to Heaven at once—from the Tabernacle to the Temple, from this place where we sing His praises at His footstool to the place where we will sing them to His face more sweetly and more loudly by far! Not one of you, oh, not one of you would we have absent! Though, Friend, you may be out of sight, and almost out of hearing, one who has just managed to crowd in among the multitude that throng this house—oh, may you with all the rest of us have a place among His chosen—and may none of you find your name left out when He, for them, shall call! Are you believing in Jesus? If so, you should be there! Are you an unbe-

liever? If you die as you are, you must be driven from His Presence—you must be destroyed from the glory of His power—all the joy and bliss that make up life must be crushed out of you and you must live banished from Him forever! And now to close. It seems that—

IV. THIS GOODLY COMPANY WHO SURROUNDED THE CENTRAL THRONE OF GOD WERE ENGAGED IN SONG.

They “cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our GOD which sits upon the Throne and unto the Lamb.” I was reading the other day a book containing the life of a very excellent Primitive Methodist minister, and I was greatly amused to find in his diary an allusion to myself. He says, “Went to Stroud to hear Mr. Spurgeon. He is a rank Calvinist, but a good man.” I was pleased to find that I was a good man, and I was equally pleased to find that I was a rank Calvinist! And when I came to review the book I was obliged to say that our Brother was quite correct about my being a rank Calvinist, and we believed that he was one, too, now that he has gone to Heaven! They are all Calvinists there! Every soul of them! They may have been Armenians on earth—thousands and millions of them were—but they are not after they get there, for here is their song, “Salvation unto our God which sits upon the Throne.” That is all my Calvinism. I am sure that is what Calvin preached, what Augustine preached, what Paul preached, what Christ would have us preach! And this is what they sing in Heaven—“Salvation unto our God which sits upon the Throne and unto the Lamb.” They sing in Heaven that it was God that planned salvation, ‘twas God that ordained them to salvation, ‘twas God that gave them salvation, ‘twas the Lamb that brought them salvation, ‘twas all of God that that salvation was carried on, and all of God that their salvation was ever perfected! They do

not, one of them, say, "Stop, now! Salvation unto our God, yes, but still, free will had a hand in it." Oh, no, no, no! There never was a soul in Heaven that ever thought that! They all feel, when they get there, that although God never violated their free wills, yet He made them willing in the day of His power, and that it was His Free Grace that brought them to come and love the Savior! I am sure, if the verse were given out in Heaven, that we sometimes sing at Communion, they would sing it there—

"'Twas all of Your Grace we were made to
obey,
While others were suffered to go
The road which by nature we chose as our way,
And which leads to the chambers of woe."

And I think they would sing that other verse that we sing at the Lord's Table—

"Why was I made to hear Your voice,
And enter while there's room,
While thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?
'Twas the same love that spread the feast,
That kindly forced me in,
Else I had still refused to taste,
And perished in my sin."

This is how they sing in Heaven, then. It is salvation—salvation all of Grace! Salvation of which the glory, from first to last, must all be given to God, and to God alone. They exclude themselves! They give no boasting to themselves. They do not say, "Salvation unto our better nature; salvation to our choicer

Grace." No, no! But all unto the Lord, all unto the Lord from first to last! Well, Brothers and Sisters, some of us will not have to change our note much when we get there, for that has been the burden of our song here! It has been the theme of our ministry from our youth up, "Salvation is of the Lord." We have learned it somewhere in the same college as that in which Jonah learned that old Calvinistic theology. He had to go into the whale's belly to learn it, and when he came out, he said, "Salvation is of the Lord." And we, too, in sharp afflictions, pains, and griefs have had to learn it and have it burned into us! And we never believed it more thoroughly in our lives than we do now, that if a sinner is saved, it is God's work that saves him—and God must have all the glory of it.

I pray the Lord to convince any poor needy soul that there is salvation in Him—and enable that poor soul now to come and take it—take it by a simple act of faith. You have not got to save yourselves. Christ has saved you. You have but to trust Him and you are saved. There is nothing for you to do—nothing for you to be, but simply to be nothing—and to let Christ be All-in-All to you, to look and live, for—

"There's life in a look at the Crucified One."

God grant that you may look, and so be among the countless throng who shall sing His praises forever and ever!

Amen.

THIRTY-THREE
WHAT AND WHENCE ARE THESE?

SERMON GIVEN ON FEBRUARY 25, 1872

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 7:13-14

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 18

"And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

REVELATION 7:13-14

Towards some subjects even the best of men need that their attention should be drawn. Certain themes need an introduction to our contemplations. We often see and yet do not see: we

see that which upon the surface attracts the eye, but we fail to penetrate into the inner and more precious truth. Even in heaven, it would seem that the mind needs directing, and wants a friend to suggest inquiry; he who sees the white-robed host may yet need to be led to the consideration of who and what they are. It is very gracious on the part of our heavenly Father that he condescends to send us messengers of different kinds to awaken our attention, to guide our inquiry, and to lead us to search deeper than we might otherwise have done. John looked at the long ranks of triumphant spirits and admired their glory, but his thoughts had not penetrated deep enough, and therefore an elder was sent to speak with him. That personage asked him a question, and this he did that John might confess his ignorance, might feel a desire to know more, and might be led to inquire upon the point which it was most needful for him to consider. While we are dwellers here below our minds are very apt to be engrossed with the things which surround us, and we want some one to direct our thoughts to the upper world; and in the same way the mind of a person dwelling above would naturally be most occupied with the things around it in the glory land, and it might be needful to bid him remember facts concerning the lower world. We generally take that view of a matter which is most consistent with our own present circumstances, whereas to see a thing completely we need to view it from many angles. Hence the elder suggests to John that he should see these glorified spirits from another point than that which naturally suggested itself to him. He was led to consider them, not as they then were, but as they had been. The question was therefore suggested him, "Who are these, whence came they? What was their earthly character? What manner of men were they in the days of their pilgrimage? Were they cherubim, or children of men? Did they come hither on wings of fire, or came they hither as do the sons of Adam? Who are

these that now have attained to such dignity and bliss, as to be now wearing the white robe of innocence, and waving the palm of victory?" To that enquiry I hope to lead your attention this morning; may it be as profitable to you as doubtless it was to John.

We are frequently tempted to think that our Lord Jesus was not in very truth a man like ourselves. His actual and proper humanity is believed among us, but not fully realized. We are apt to fancy that his was another flesh and another manhood from our own, whereas he was in all things made like unto his brethren, and was tempted in all points like as we are, though without sin. It is, therefore, needful again and again and again to set out the true brotherhood and kinship of Christ. The same spirit of error leads us into the feeling that those holy men who have attained to felicity must have been something different from ourselves. We set the apostles up in twelve niches, and look upon them as very superior beings. We can hardly imagine that they were partakers of our flesh and blood; and, as we see the whole white-robed host, we imagine in our hearts that they must have been far different from ourselves. They did well and valiantly we admit, and we rejoice that they have attained to a blessed reward; but we dream that we ourselves cannot do as well, nor win as great a recompense. Without exactly defining the feeling, we in some way persuade ourselves that something in their persons or in their circumstances entirely separated the glorified saints from us, and gave them an advantage over us, and therefore we despair of ever achieving their triumphs. Now, this error must be overcome, because it furnishes convenient excuses for indolence, and represses those holy ardours which are the life of elevated piety. Brethren, the point to which the elder drew John's attention is the one we are now driving at; he would have him note that those were glorified in heaven who were once tried and tempted as we are; they were,

in fact, men of like passions with us. I grant you it would be very delightful for us to contemplate the present condition of joy and immortality possessed by yonder bright spirits, but for the moment it will be more practically useful for us to consider what they were and how they came to be what they now are, so that finding that they were of old what we now are, we may follow in their track, and may obtain to the same blessed rank as that which they now enjoy.

Our sermon on this occasion will consist of an answer to these two questions,—“Whence come they?” for though that was the second question asked, it was the first answered; and, secondly, “Who are these?” Our third point shall be, “What of all this?”

I. Concerning the bright spirits in heaven—WHENCE CAME THEY? These bearing the palms—whence came they? Reason itself suggests that they came from battle. It is not according to the wont of God to use emblems without a meaning. The palm, the ensign of triumph, indicates most certainly a conflict and conquest. As on earth palm would not be given if not won, we may conclude that the Lord would not have distributed the prize unless there had been a preceding warfare and victory. A conflict for a temporal crown is severe; how much more for an unfading palm in heaven. The winners of these palms must have passed through a battle of battles, an agony of agonies, a great tribulation. Palms which may be waved even before the throne of the august majesty of heaven are not easily come by. From the very fact that the glorified carry palms, we may infer that they did not come from beds of sloth, or gardens of pleasure, or palaces of peace, but that they endured hardness, and were men trained for war. The inference is well warranted, for it is even so; and the answer to the question, “Whence came they?” is this: “These are they which came out of great tribulation.”

1. They were then like ourselves, for, in the first place, they were tried like others. They came out of great tribulation. Note, then, that the saints now glorified were not screened from sorrow. I saw to-day a number of lovely flowers they were as delightful in this month of February as thee would have been in the midst of summer; but I did not ask, "Whence came they?" I know very well that they were the products of the conservatory; they had not been raised amid the frosts of this chill season, else they had not bloomed as yet. But when I look upon God's flowers blooming in heaven, I understand from the voice of inspiration that they enjoyed no immunity from the chill breath of grief; they were made to bloom by the master hand of the Chief Husbandman, in all their glory, amid the afflictions, and adversities, and catastrophes which are common to men. God's elect are not pampered like spoiled children, neither are they like "the tender and delicate woman who would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness." They are, it is true, secured from all fatal injury, but they are not protected from the rough winds and rolling billows which toss every barque which bears a son of Adam. Turn over the roll of the worthies of the Lord from the first hero of faith to the last, and you shall not meet with a sorrowless name. Great are their privileges, but immunity from trouble is not among them. Was Adam God's elect? We hope he was, but certainly in the sweat of his face he ate his bread, and through his tears he saw the mangled body of his second son. Did God honor Abraham, and call him his friend? He was not without family afflictions, among the chief of which was the call to take his son, his only son, and offer him up for a sacrifice. Moses was king in Jeshurun, but his yoke, as a servant of the Lord, was a very heavy one; for all the day long was he vexed with the rebellions of a wayward people. Was David, the man after God's own heart? You know how deep called unto deep, while all God's waves

and billows went over him. Speak ye of the prophets; which of them escaped without trial? Come ye to the apostles; which of these enjoyed a life of ease? Did they not all of them but one pass through the gates of death, wearing the martyr's crown? And he who died of old age, had not he been an exile in Patmos? Where, from their day down to this, among the elect of heaven do you find a single child of God unchastened, a solitary branch of the heavenly vine unpruned, or one ingot of precious gold untried with fire? Through flood, and through the fire, lies the pathway of the chosen. Through troops we must cut our way, and over walls we must leap, for to none is there a luxurious path to heaven. We must fight if we would reign.

True, God's people have been found in all ranks, but; in every position they have had their sorrows. You find Esther, a queen beloved of God, but what were the tremblings of her heart when, with her life in her hand, she went in unto the king to plead against that wicked Haman? Lazarus was in the opposite stage of human circumstance, but he lay suffering at the gate of his ungenerous neighbor, and the dogs came and licked his sores. In palace or in cottage the rod is the sure portion of all the heirs of salvation. Each state to the believer produces bitter herbs peculiar to itself, he shall never need to search far for the appointed accompaniments to the paschal lamb. I have heard that a great statesman once stopped his horse on a plain to speak with a shepherd who was resting in the midst of his flock. Thinking of his own heavy anxieties, he expressed his envy of the shepherd, because his life was so free from vexation. "Sir," said the shepherd, "I may not be troubled exactly as you are, but I have my own worries; do you see that black ewe there?" "Yes." "If she were dead," continued the shepherd, "I might be a perfectly happy man; but she is a plague to me, for every now and then she takes to going astray, and all the rest are sure to follow her." Rest assured, that there is a black ewe in every

flock. Man is born to trouble. All the sons of God in heaven passed by "weeping-cross." Such burdens as we are now carrying on earth once pressed the shoulders of those now in glory. Our crosses are reproductions of the old yoke of Christ. Under our personal and relative griefs the glorified have smarted, and our sinkings of heart and fears of soul they have experienced. "Through much tribulation" they have inherited the kingdom.

Note, next, that they were not even screened from temptation. To the child of God, temptation to sin is a greater grievance than the suffering of pain. The saint has often said, "I could endure adversity, but it is misery to be day after day solicited to evil, to have the bait perpetually dangling before me, and to feel something in my soul which half consents to sin, and would altogether surrender were it not for watchful grace." Brethren, temptation to the pure mind is very grievous; to be sifted in Satan's sieve is a sore trial. Storms on any sea are to be dreaded; but a whirlwind raised by Satan on the black sea of corruption is horrible beyond conception. Yet do not say you cannot enter heaven because you are tempted, for all those snow-white bands attained their glorious standing through much temptation, as well as through much affliction. They, like their Master, were tempted in all points as you are. Let me take you again to the old records, and ask you whether you find a single saint untempted? Oh, ye young men, who lament that you are so often allured to evil, have ye forgotten Joseph in Potiphar's house? Ye who dread the persecutor's frown, have ye forgotten Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego? Ye of riper years, who feel your feet almost gone, do ye not remember David, and how he was tempted; ay, and worse, how he fell, and with broken bones had to limp his way to heaven? Which of the saints has been unassailed by the fiery darts of the wicked one? Has not the fowler spread his nets to entangle

every one of them? Has he not laid snares for every faithful soul? Review all the ranks of the white-robed squadrons, and enquire of every glorified spirit. Say to each one, "And thou wert thou also tempted? Did the world seek alternately to fascinate and frighten thee? Hadst thou a body of sin and death to drag thee down? Hadst thou foes among thine own household? Didst thou also cry, 'Woe is me, for I dwell in Meshech?'" To such questions each one of the perfected saints would reply that their perils were such as ours, and had it not been for Almighty grace, they would have utterly perished from the way. The shields of the mighty, which are now so highly exalted, were once battered by the blows of temptation, even as ours are at this hour.

We may add to all this, again, that they were men who as keenly felt trial and temptation as we do. Too frequently, when we are forced to admit that the trials of the saints were similar to our own, we persuade ourselves that their natures were less tender, their feelings less sensitive, their spirits less vulnerable than our own. We imagine that these ancient heroes wore some secret armor, or had their hearts steeled within, or wore a charmed life; and yet we know right well that all flesh of man has the same power to suffer, that a wound in another man's body bleeds even as it would in our own, and that reproach is as bitter to one spirit as to another. As face answereth to face in water, so the heart of man to man. Good men, because they are good, are not the less sorrowful when their beloved ones are taken from them: gracious men are not by grace petrified so as to despise the chastening, of the Lord. Jacob mourned for Rachel, and David for Jonathan. You do not find the saints less troubled than other men when friendship turned to treachery, and love to hate. Tears flowed as readily from holy eyes as from the eyes of the ungodly. They were sons of men, born of women as we are, and subject to the same passions and

emotions. Oh, no, they were not Stoics, nor men of iron, but, made of the same earth as ourselves, their hearts palpitated to the same tune. Daughter of grief, dost thou say, "I wish I were as the holy women of old, that in my trouble I might not be so cast down?" Read thou the history of Hannah, and mark how her adversary "vexed her sore to make her fret." She, too, was a woman of a sorrowful spirit. That story in the commencement of the First Book of Samuel I am sure must often have cheered the daughters of affliction when they have prayed in the bitterness of their souls, for they have said, here was a woman, tempted like as we are and smarting as we do under unkind remarks and slanderous reports and ungenerous treatment, and yet she rejoiced in God's salvation. If your spirit is constitutionally sorrowful, and its wounds are often wantonly opened by those about you, read the story of Jeremiah, and his plaintive notes in the Lamentations will both help you to express your woes and furnish you with sympathy in them. Read, too, the sorrowful bemoanings of Job. That grand old patriarch of Uz is very stout, and plays the man right gloriously; he is no puling child, whining and wincing, at a gentle touch of the rod; but patient as he is and a very king, among men, yet how bitterly he curses the day of his birth, and how heavily he complains. Nor were New Testament saints less tender, for Mary and Martha wept, Magdalene was bowed down with sorrow at her Lord's death, and the heart of the Virgin was pierced as with a sword. Peter wept bitterly, and Paul had continued heaviness. Tribulations abounded and afflictions were multiplied to the first disciples, and we wrong both themselves and us if we dream that it was easier for them to suffer than for us. I grant you that they possessed a secret something which enabled them to endure, but that something was not homeborn in their nature any more than it is in ours. They were fortified by a secret strength which they found at the throne of God in prayer, a patience which the

Holy Ghost wrought in them, and which he is equally ready to work in us.

But, perhaps, it may be thought by some that those holy men who now wave the palm-branch were spared some of the keener and more refined tribulations; to which I reply, it certainly was not so. David especially appears to have compassed the whole round of affliction. He could say, "all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." From all quarters his trials arose; and from his youth to his death they assailed him. Let me remind you of that special grief which came upon him when his darling son excited rebellion against him, and his own chosen friend and counsellor, Ahithophel, betrayed him, and to this add the scene when that same darling son was slain in red-handed rebellion against his father, and David cried aloud, "O Absalom, my son, my son! would God I had died for thee! O Absalom, my son, my son!" I should not feel that I had ventured too far if I said that there is no trouble known to any person in this audience which would not find its parallel in the case of the afflicted writer of the Psalms. But, perhaps, you tell me that yours is a spiritual grief, and that such a wound is the deepest of all. Turn, then, to the life of the apostle Paul, and, as far as he unveils his experience, you shall find him to be the subject of internal strifes and spiritual contentions of the sharpest kind. Remember, especially, when with the thorn in his flesh he prayed thrice to God to have it taken away, but it was not removed; sufficient grace was given him, but he had to bear the inward smart; for, through much tribulation even of that kind must the chief of the apostles follow his Lord. What need of multiplying words? It is plain to every man that understandeth, that the children of God have been tried like others, and they who have won the victory fought a real battle, armed only as we may be, and assailed neither more nor less as we are, by the same enemies and the same weapons. As the church militant

we claim indisputable kinship with the church triumphant. We are their companions in tribulation.

2. Next, we believe that the saints who are not in heaven needed trial like others. The word used in our translation is "tribulation," and you know that the word *tribulatio* is used by the Romans to signify a threshing instrument. When they beat out the corn from the straw, they called it *tribulatio*; and so tribulation is sent to us to separate our chaff from our wheat. Since the same tribulation happened to those who are now in heaven, we infer that they needed it as much as ourselves. To what end do men need tribulation? We reply, they often require it to arouse them; and yonder saints who serve God day and night in his temple, once slept as do others, and needed to be bestirred. Were they not apostles who slept Gethsemane? Yea, were they not three of the chief of the apostles who slumbered within a stone's cast of their Master in his agony? The best of men are prone to slumber, and need to be awakened by the buffetings of sorrow. They needed trial to chasten them. What son has God ever had, save his firstborn and well-beloved, that did not need chastening? Inasmuch as we are all sinners, we have need in our Father's house to suffer from the rod. They wanted tribulation as we do to loosen them from the earth, else they would have struck their roots into this poor soil, and tried to live as if this world were their portion. Affliction was also necessary to develop their graces; even as spices need bruising to bring forth their smell, and rose leaves require distilling to draw forth their sweetest perfume. They required adversity to educate them into complete manhood, for they too were once babes in grace. It is in the gymnasium of affliction that men are modeled and fashioned in the beauty of holiness, and all their spiritual powers are trained for harmonious action. It was meet also that they should suffer, in order to complete their service. Like their Lord, they had to be made perfect

through suffering; and if they had not suffered they had not finished the work which he had given them to do. They needed tribulation, moreover, that they might be made like their Savior; for a saint untroubled, how can he be like the man who wore the thorn crown? Never smitten, never slandered, never despised, never mocked at, never crucified, then how could we be like our Head? Shall the servant be above his Master, or the disciple above his Lord? They who are in heaven passed through tribulation, and they needed it as much as we do. Let us think of all this, for it may encourage us to press forward. They were knights of the same order as ourselves, and by the self-same methods obtained the honours which they wear.

3. Again, the children of God who are in heaven in their trials had no other support than that which is still afforded to all the saints. A miracle was here and there wrought I grant you; but then there are other things to be said on our side, for the Spirit of God was not given then as fully as we possess him now, and Christ had not then brought life and immortality to light through the gospel so that what little advantage they had in miracle is far outweighed by the advantage we have in the gospel dispensation. What was it that upheld the saints of old who are now before the throne? Their faith was sustained by the promise of God, but we have the promise too. They rested on God's faithful word; that word is faithful still. We have more promises by far than most of them had received. They had but here and there a word of inspiration, we have the whole volume of consolation; yea, we have a double portion, for we have two books full of choice and gracious words. We have, therefore, more to cheer us than they had. They had the Spirit of God, you say; but, I reply, so have we. They had him with them, we have him in us. He visited them occasionally; he dwelleth in us; he never removeth from his people but abideth in them for ever. You will tell me that God worked with them: God works

with us. Providence was on their side; and is not providence on our side also? All things worked together for their good; they work together for our good in the same manner. The Lord who was at the helm of their vessel when storms assaulted it, still stands at the helm for us and holds the tiller with a strong hand. He who walked the waves of Gennesaret, and came to the rescue of the storm-tossed disciples, still saith to us, "It is I; be not afraid." I see no point in which they had superior resorts to those which are open to ourselves, for the Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Their rest lay where our rest still lies; their peace and comfort were the same as our own. The Prince of Wurtemberg on one occasion in the midst of certain kings and great men heard them boasting, one of the mines which enriched his dominions, another of his forests, another of his vineyards. Now the Prince of Wurtemberg was poor, but he said, "I have a jewel in my country which I would not exchange for all your wealth," and, when they questioned him, he said, "If I were lost in any forest of my territory, or could not find my way along a lonesome road, if I said to the first peasant that I met that I was his king, I could lean my head upon him and lie down to sleep, and sleep securely there, feeling certain that he would watch over his king as he would over his child." So we feel, and so the saints of old felt a delightful security any where beneath the blue heavens of God. If we have not riches, if we have not honor, if we have nothing that flesh could desire, we can lie down anywhere and feel that we are perfectly safe in the divine keeping. The angels watch over us and protect us, for we are the children of God: all things work for our good; the beasts of the field are our friends, and stones of the field are in league for our defense. This was the portion of those who are now above; it is our portion still.

4. Very hurriedly I must notice, before I leave this first point, that if there was any difference between those saints and

our selves, it lay in their enduring superior tribulations, for "these are they that came out of great tribulation." If, I say, we must distinguish them from ourselves at all, it lies in this, that some of them were martyred as we are not, resisted unto blood as we have not, and were put to death by cruel torments as probably we shall not be. Theirs was the battle's brunt. For them the furnace was heated seven times hotter. My brethren, if their faith sustained them and won them the palm branch, why should not ours do the like for us? The text says, "These are they that come out of the great tribulation," for so it is in the original. It may mean some peculiarly severe tribulation which has befallen, or is about to befall the church; and, if so, it is consoling to observe that the saints shall come out of it unscathed: but I rather take it to mean the one long tribulation of God's Saints in all ages. It is all one; it is all a part of the sufferings of the body of Christ; the saints in glory have had their share in the great tribulation, and, if anything, a greater share than we. We feel persuaded then, that as they were men like ourselves, who suffered as we suffer, and were supported as we are supported, we shall, through the same grace, win the same victory.

II. I will not detain you longer on that point, though there is much to be said, but I must take you to the second, and that is, **WHAT ARE THESE?** John beheld them all in white robes; and the question to be answered was, "Who are these,—these in heaven?" The reply was "They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb;" from which we gather, first, that all those in heaven were sinners, for they all needed to wash their robes. No superfluity would have been written down in this book; but had the robes been perfectly white, there had been no necessity to cleanse them, certainly not to cleanse them in, Jesus' blood. They were sinners then, those glorious ones were sinners like ourselves. Look up at them

now! Observe their ravishing beauty! See how guiltless they are! And then, remember what they were. Oh, ye trembling sinners, whose bruised hearts dare not indulge a hope of the divine favor, those fair ones were once like you, and you are to-day what they were once. They were all shapen in iniquity as you were: they were everyone of them of woman born, and, therefore, conceived in sin. They were all placed in circumstances which allured them to sin; they had their temptations, as we have shown, and they lived in the midst of an ungodly generation, even as you do. What is more, they all sinned, for mere temptation would not have soiled their robes, but actual sin defiled them. There were thoughts of sin, there were words of sin, there were acts of sin in all of them. Did you observe that bright one who sang most sweetly of them all? Shall I tell you a part of his earthly history? He was one of the chief of sinners; he takes rank now amongst the chief of choristers, because he has most to sing about, since he had most forgiven and loved most. He will not tell you that he was naturally a saintly spirit, and that by mortification, and self-denial, and diligent perseverance he won his place in heaven. No, he will confess that his salvation was all of grace, for he was like others a sinner, and had transgressed above many. You will say, perhaps, that none of the saints had committed sins like yours, but there I must flatly contradict you. Amongst that illustrious company there are those who were once sinners of the deepest dye—the adulterer, the thief, the harlot, the murderer; some who were such are now glorified, for we have such characters mentioned in infallible Scripture as having been forgiven, sanctified, and at length glorified. Whatever your sin may be, and I will not mention it, for the mention of sin does not help to purify us from it; whatever it is, all manner of sin and blasphemy have been forgiven unto men, and the precious blood of Jesus has brought into eternal glory men stained with every form of sin.

Jesus has cleansed crimson sinners, deep ingrained with iniquity, and scarlet sinners, whose crimes were of the most glaring hue. They all in heaven were sinners, such as we are.

Secondly, they all who are in heaven needed an atonement, and the same atonement as we rely upon. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Not one of them became white through his tears of repentance, not one through the shedding of the blood of bulls or of goats. They all wanted a vicarious sacrifice, and for none of them was any sacrifice effectual, except the death of Jesus Christ the Lord. They washed their robes nowhere but in the blood of the Lamb. O sinner, that blood of the Lamb is available now. The fountain filled with blood, drunk from Immanuel's veins, is not closed, nor is its efficacy diminished. Every child of Adam now in heaven came there through the blood of the great substitute. This was the key that opened heaven's door,—the blood, the blood of the Lamb, it was the one purification of them all, without one exception. If I were in thy case, O sinner, God helping me, I would in the blood as they did, and enter heaven as they have done.

You will further notice that the saints in haven realized the atonement in the same way as we must do. They washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. The act which gave them the virtue which lies in the atonement was the act of faith. They did not bring anything to the blood, any merit, or feeling, or preparation; they only brought their filthy garments to the blood, and nothing else. They washed and were clean. That was all. They did not give, they took; they did not impart, but they received. In this same way I have realized the merit of my Savior's passion, and I know that every believer here will confess that this is his hope, he has washed and he is clean. There is nothing to do, and nothing to feel, and nothing to be, in order to forgiveness; we have but to wash and the filth

is gone. Every child of God in heaven whether he were king or prophet, or seer, or priest, came there through simply relying and depending upon the blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb, and that is all,—all. You must not dare to add to it, or you will sin against the all-sufficient sacrifice.

The text tells that the sole reason for the saints being in heaven at all was because they washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb: "Therefore are they before the throne of God." But, is not one of them there because he had not sinned? There is no answer from all the shining hosts. Is not one of them glorified because a long life of consecration wiped out the small offenses of his youth? No response comes to the enquiry. But, if you ask whether they were there because they have washed in the blood, the "Yes" which comes from them all is like the voice of many waters, and like great thunders.

III. Now, beloved, WHAT OF ALL THIS? Why, first of all, we must not draw the conclusion that trouble and temptation are any argument that a man will get to heaven. Perhaps I may be misunderstood this morning and therefore I add a caution. There is a groundless notion abroad, that those who are badly off in this world will certainly have it made up to them in the world to come; and I have heard the parable of Lazarus and Dives quoted as though it taught that those who are poor here will be rich hereafter. There is not a shadow of reason for any such belief. You may go through much tribulation to hell as well as to heaven; and as a man may have two heavens, here and hereafter, by living near to God, so may a man have two hells, the hell which he bringeth upon himself in this life by his extravagances, his wickedness, and his lust, and the hell that shall be his punishment for ever in the world to come. Believe me, many a ragged, loathsome beggar has been damned; he was as poor as Lazarus, but not as gracious as he, and therefore no angels carried him to Abraham's bosom.

There is no efficacy in the tongues of dogs to lick away sin, neither can a hungry belly atone for a guilty soul. Many a soul has begged for crumbs on earth, and has afterwards craved in vain for water in hell. You must take care not to suck poisonous error out of the flowers of truth.

I would, however, have you learn that no amount of trial which we have to suffer here, if we are believers in Jesus, should lead us to anything like despair, for however trouble may encompass us to-day, those in heaven came through as great a tribulation, and why may not we? If messengers should come one after the other with swift feet to bring us heavy tidings, if all our property should melt, and our children should die, and even the partner of our bosom should tempt us to curse God, we must still hold fast our confidence. Our faith's motto should be, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." God may smite his children, but he never can cast off his children. He must love them, and he will love them for ever and for ever. Let us also understand that no amount of sin of which we may have been guilty ought to lead us to despair of pardon, salvation, and ultimate entrance into heaven, if we also wash our robes in the blood of the Lamb. Those who are in heaven have washed their robes white by faith in Jesus, and so may we. I may be addressing some one who has written his own death warrant. I thank God that the Lord has never written it. You may have said, "I know that I never shall have mercy." Who told thee that God had set a limit to his grace? Who has been up to heaven and found that thy name is not written among his chosen? Oh, do God the justice to believe that he delighteth in mercy, and that it is one of his greatest joys to pass by iniquity, transgression, and sin. And, suppose this day you should have in your own person trouble and sorrow united; suppose you should be going through the great tribulation, and at the same time you should have committed sin which has defiled your garment

most conspicuously; though the gall and the wormwood be both in your cup and both be bitterest of the bitter, yet do not despair, for the saints whom John saw had the double blessing of deliverance and cleansing, and why should not you? I make bold to tell you that if your troubles were tenfold what they are, and your sins also were multiplied ten times, yet there is power in the eternal arm to bear you up under the tribulation, and there is efficacy in the precious blood to remove your sinful stains. By an act of faith cast yourselves upon God in Christ Jesus. If you do so, you shall take your place amongst the white-robed bands when this life ends.

I was led to these reflections this morning by the remembrance of the few short days ago since our beloved brother, Mr. Dransfield, whose mortal remains we committed to the tomb last Monday, was among us. You remember his accustomed seat, just here, at the prayer meeting; you remember how there was never an empty seat just over yonder at any of our public services. He was always among us, and he was just like ourselves. I am sure we all felt at home in his presence. He did not walk among us at all as a stilted personage or a supernatural being; he was a father among us; we loved him, esteemed him, revered him, but he was a man of men among us. I have tried to realize the same spirit before the throne of God, and I think I have been able to grasp the thought. I know he was like ourselves; I am equally certain that he is yonder, and that he is rejoicing in Christ; none of us doubt that. Now let us make a practical, common sense use of that fact and feel, I, too, resting, where he rested—for, oh, how sweetly did he rest in his dying Lord—I, too, hoping as he hoped, shall bear up under troubles as he did during his painful illness, and I, too, shall have a joyful death as he did, for his soul triumphed in his God beyond measure. Why should not all of us, his brethren, enter where he is gone? Dear sister, why should not you? You who

are consumptive, you who know that death is drawing near to you, because you carry a disease about you which will take you home? Just realize the fact now before us. Our dear and well-known friend is really gone to the better land. You shook hands with that dear brother a few days ago, and now he is with God, and is waving the palm and wearing the white robe. It is not a dream, a fiction, or a fancy. It is not the delusion of high-blown fanaticism. It is not a wondrous attainment for some few special and renowned saints. Oh, no, it is for every one of us who believe in Jesus. They in heaven are those who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. It is not said, "These are they that were emperors," not "These are they who were reared in marble halls," not "these are they who were great scholars," not "These are they who were mighty preachers," not "These are they who were great apostles," not "These are they who lived spotless lives;" no, but these are they who came through the tribulation of life, and were cleansed from their sins, as others must be, in the precious blood of Jesus; therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple.

Dear brother Dransfield, thou wast bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and yet thou art perfected before the throne. We thy brethren are on the way and shall be with thee soon.

Amen.

THIRTY-FOUR
WHY THE HEAVENLY ROBES ARE
WHITE

SERMON GIVEN ON SEPTEMBER 24, 1876

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 7:14

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 22

“These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb”

REVELATION 7:14.

OUR curiosity enquires into the condition of those who have newly entered heaven. Like fresh stars they have lit up the celestial firmament with an added splendour. New voices are heard in the orchestra of the redeemed. In what condition are they at the moment of their admission to the heavenly seats? Their bodies are left behind, we know, to moulder back to mother earth, but how fare their unclothed immortal spirits? What now occupies those pure and perfect minds? We are not

left in the dark upon this matter: our Lord Jesus Christ has brought immortality and life to light, and in the words of our text and the preceding and following verses we are informed as to these new comers, these recruits for the church triumphant. Were our text properly translated it would run thus: "these are they that come out of great tribulation," or who "are coming,"—in the present tense. If the word does not distinctly refer to those who have "just come," it certainly includes such. Those who "come" are those who have come, and those who shall come, but it must include those who are at this moment arriving, those whom I venture to call heaven's new-born princes, her fresh blooming flowers whose beauty for the first time is seen in Paradise. Lo, I see the newly departed passing through the river of death, ascending the other shore, and entering in through the gates into the city. What are these new comers doing? We find that they are not kept waiting outside, nor put through a quarantine, nor cast into purgatorial fires, but as they arrive from the great tribulation they are at once admitted to holy fellowship—"therefore are they before the throne of God": dwelling in the courts of the Great King, to go no more out for ever. Earthly courtiers only stand at times in their monarch's presence, but these abide for evermore before the throne of God and of the Lamb, favoured to behold the face of God without veil between, and to see the King in his beauty in the land that is very far off. How quickly has earth faded from their minds and heaven's glory flashed upon them! The sick bed and the weeping friends are gone, and the throne of their God and Saviour fills the whole field of their delighted vision.

They are arrayed for holy service, and arrayed at once, for they wear white robes fitted for their priestly service. It is true they have no material bodies, but in some mystic sense which is applicable to the spirit world these holy men wear a vesture

which qualifies them for celestial worship and all the holy service of the heavenly state.

They are not only admitted to see God, and prepared to engage in his most glorious worship, but they are at once permitted actually to commence their holy lifework by serving God day and night in his temple. We find them already engaged in actual adoration, for they cried with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." These pure spirits yet have voices which our God who is a spirit hears and approves; their song is full of purest gospel truth, and their earnestness is shown by the loudness of their notes. They need no angels to instruct them in the manners and customs of the upper world, for even while they sojourned on earth their conversation was in heaven, and they are at home at once. They are not waiting till they have learned the song, but they know it already, for grace is the rehearsal of glory. They do not need to be initiated into the sacred mysteries, for they have had access within the veil while here below. They will begin their heavenly life at once, take up the tune just where they find it, and join in the hymn just as soon as they arrive; beginning at once to praise him that sitteth upon the throne, and to adore the Lamb. How sweet it is to think of those who have lately left us, that, though they broke off this mortal life as it were before it was complete, and left it a fragment, yet they do not begin life up yonder prematurely or abruptly, but exactly at the right time. The new singer takes his place in the choir just when his part is coming on, and takes up the key-note as if he had been there a century, and begins his song, with his white robe on and his palm branch in his hand, as one who is well prepared to take his part in the endless adoration. Sudden glory does not startle the inhabitants of heaven as sudden death startles the dwellers upon earth. The immigrants to heaven are expected, and the gates stand always open to welcome them.

There are no untimely births into the church of the firstborn, each one cometh in his season.

As to the state and condition of the newly glorified, they are described to us still further in the verses which follow the text. It seems to me that those pure spirits who are without their bodies as yet, are pictured as being like the children of Israel when the great camp was pitched in the wilderness. In the desert the Lord God would have dwelt among them, had it not been for their sins: in heaven he does so dwell in the supremest sense. "He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them." Over the heads of the great camp in the wilderness there hung a cloud of glory, which in the daytime sheltered them from the great heat of the sun, and at night lit up the whole camp, so that all the streets of that canvas city were brilliant through the whole night. That bright light indicated the presence of God: he did as it were hover over them, and cover them with his wing: but in heaven he shall be nearer still, and dwell among them. His presence shall sanctify, enlighten and overshadow all. The Shekinah, the holy and mystic light which indicated the presence of God in the tabernacle, was veiled from the sight of the multitude, but in heaven all shall behold the glory of the Lord, and be surrounded with it. The saints above enjoy a conscious nearness and fellowship with the Lord, such as we cannot hope to rival on this side of Jordan. He shall dwell among them. Happy spirits, who have this felicity to have God indwelling them, abiding with them and surrounding them for ever! Hence it is that they hunger no more, for as Israel fed upon the manna, so they feast on love divine; they thirst no more, for as Israel drank of the rock, so are the glorified ones with Christ, and drink for ever of his love. "The sun shall not light on them nor any heat;" how can it, when they are utterly withdrawn from the influence of materialism and screened from all evil influences of every kind by the matchless presence

of the mighty God, who of old was vanguard and rearguard to his people, and for ever is their all in all. With the Lamb for their leader, what choice company they keep! What hallowed paths they tread! What sacred communications they receive! What amazing raptures they feel! With the Lamb to lead them to fountains of waters undiscovered by their feet aforetime, what fresh joy shall burst in upon them! With God himself to be their comforter, how all regrets at having left beloved ones down below shall be driven away completely, and how completely shall their whole souls be filled with perfect bliss without a single briny tear to mar the joy.

In the vision before us, the most striking point about the newly arrived according to the speech of the elder and the remark of John was their wearing white robes. The venerable elder does not appear to have taken notice of much else except this, for he asks the question, "Who are these that are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they?" That was the point to which he would direct John's thoughts— who can they be that shine so brightly there before the eternal throne? Whence have they come in such attire? So this morning we will consider first, what did their white robes indicate? Secondly, how did they come by them? and lastly, what is the lesson of the text to us?

I. WHAT DID THESE WHITE ROBES MEAN? Why were they white robed? Of course it is all symbol, these spirits wore no garments, because they had no bodies, but their robes signify their character, office, history, and condition.

The white robes show first the immaculate purity of their character. "They are without fault before the throne of God." Into the heavenly place no sin could possibly enter, and they have brought no sin with them; no, not so much as the trace or relic or scar of a sin. They are "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing," presented holy, unblamable, and unreprouvable in the sight of the Most High. White signifies perfection; it is not

so much a colour as the harmonious union and blending of all the hues, colours, and beauties of light. In the characters of just men made perfect we have the combination of all virtues, the balancing of all excellencies, a display of all the beauties of grace. Are they not like their Lord, and is he not all beauties in one? Here a saint has an evident excess of the red of courage, or the blue of constancy, or the violet of tenderness, and we have to admire the varied excellencies and lament the multiform defects of the children of God; but up yonder each saint shall combine in his character all things which are lovely and of good repute, and his garments shall be always white to indicate completeness, as well as spotlessness, of character. We ought to note that the white here meant is bright and shining, to indicate that their characters shall be lustrous and attractive. They shall be the admiration of principalities and powers as they see in them the manifold wisdom of God. In these white garments they shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Our Lord's garments in the transfiguration are not only said to have been "whiter than any fuller could make them," but they are said to have been glistering and "white as the light." The redeemed before the throne shine like stars before the eyes of all who are favoured to gaze upon their assembly. What a glory there will be about the character of a child of God! Even those who have seen it long shall still be filled with wonder at what grace has done. God himself shall take delight in his people when he has made them "white in the blood of the Lamb." That the white robes must refer to their own character is clear; I have taken it for granted that it is so, because the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, which is the righteousness of the saints, cannot possibly be meant here, since that cannot be either defiled or washed. To speak of washing the righteousness of Christ in the blood of Christ would not only be an erroneous idea, but it would involve a conglomeration of metaphor not to

be tolerated for a moment. The white robes here intended are the personal characters of the saints as they appear before God himself. They are washed in the blood of the Lamb, and so cleansed that they are absolutely perfect.

By “white robes” we also understand the fitness of their souls for the service to which they are appointed; they were chosen before all worlds to be kings and priests unto God: but a priest might not stand before the Lord to minister until he had put on his appointed linen garments; and therefore the souls which have been taken up to heaven are represented in white robes to show that they are completely fitted for that divine service to which they were ordained of old, to which the Spirit of God called them while they were here, and in which Jesus Christ leads the way, being a priest for ever at their head. They are able to offer the incense of praise acceptably, for they are girded with the garments of their office. We know not all the occupations of the blessed, but we know that they are all such as can be performed by a royal priesthood; and hence the priestly garb betokens that they are ready to do the will of God in all things, and to offer perpetually the sacrifice of praise unto the Lord.

“White robes” also signify victory. I should think that in almost every nation white has indicated the joy of triumph. Often when generals have returned from battle they and the warriors have been clothed in white, or have ridden upon white horses. True, the Romans adopted purple as their imperial colour, and well they might, for their victories and their rule were alike bloody and cruel; but the Christ of God sets forth his gentle and holy victories by white: it is on a “white cloud” that he shall come to judge the world, and his seat of judgment shall be “the great white throne.” Upon a “white horse” he shall ride, and all the armies of heaven shall follow him on white horses. Lo, he is clothed with a “white” garment down to the feet. Thus

has he chosen white as the symbolic colour of his victorious kingdom, and so the redeemed wear it, even the newly born, freshly escaped out of the great tribulation, because they are all of them more than conquerors. They wear the victor garb and bear the palm which is the victor symbol.

White is also the colour of rest. If a man desired to do a day's work in this poor grimy world, a snow-white garment would hardly suit him, for it would soon be stained and soiled. Hence the garments of toil are generally of another colour, more fitted for a dusty world. The day of rest, the day of Sabbatic joy and pleasure is fittingly denoted by white garments. Well may the redeemed be thus arrayed, for they have finally put off the garments of toil and the armour of battle, and they rest from their labours in the rest of God.

Chiefly, white is the colour of joy. Almost all nations have adopted it as most suitable for bridal array, and so therefore these happy spirits have put on their bridal robes, and are ready for the marriage supper of the Lamb. Though they are waiting for the resurrection, yet are they waiting with their bridal garments on, waiting and rejoicing, waiting and chanting their Redeemer's praises, for they feast with him till he shall descend to consummate their bliss by bringing their bodies from the grave to share with them in the eternal joy.

So you see the white garments have a great deal of teaching about them, and if it were the object of my discourse to bring it out, I could well spend a full hour in describing what is meant; but I am rather driving at something else, and to that I invite you. May the Holy Spirit lead us into it.

II. Secondly, HOW DID THEY COME BY THOSE WHITE GARMENTS? How came they to be so white? It was the whiteness which struck the mind of the elder and of the apostle himself: what could be the cause of it? "Whence came they?" said he.

Those characters were not so pure, or, in other words, those garments were not so white by nature. They are washed, you see, and therefore they must once have been stained. They have “washed their robes,” they were not, therefore, always white. No! Original sin has stained the character of all the sons of Adam. There is about us from the very beginning an abundance of leprous spots, the garment is not white when first we put it on. How shall he be clean that is born of woman? Then, alas, there are by nature upon the robe the stains of actual sin which we committed before conversion: we altogether tremble at the remembrance of it, and we should utterly despair if we did not know that it has been washed away in the blood of the Lamb. Then, alas, there are the iniquities we have committed since we have known the Lord, under some aspects the most baneful and the most sinful of all our transgressions; for we have transgressed against eternal love since we have known it, and rebelled against an electing, redeeming, forgiving God. Ah, this is sin indeed! Amongst the hosts above there is not one robe but what needed to be washed, they all required it, for by nature they were all stained by sin in many ways. Do not think of one saint who has gone to his reward above as being in any way different in nature from yourselves; they were all men of like passions with us, men who had within them the same tendencies to sin. If we suppose them to have been naturally better, they will not yield us so much stimulus, for then we shall ascribe their victory to the bettemess of their nature, and shall despair for ourselves; but if we recollect that they were just as fallen, and just as tainted with inbred sin as we are, we shall then rejoice and take courage; for if they have entered heaven with unspotted garments, having washed them, why should not we be washed also and be white as they?

But it might be suggested that, perhaps, they came to their rest by a cleaner way than that which now lies before us.

Possibly there was something about their course of life, their surroundings, the condition of the age in which they lived, which helped them to keep their garments white. No, my brethren, it was not so; they passed along the road of tribulation, and that tribulation was not of a less trying kind than ours, but was severe enough to be called “great tribulation”: so that they followed the same pathway as ourselves.

*“Once they were mourning here below,
And wet their couch with tears;
They wrestled hard as we do now,
With sins and doubts and fears.”*

Their road was just as miry as ours, and perhaps even more so: they came through every slough and water-splash, bespattering their garments even as we do, and sorrowing because of it even as we do; but they went where we go, even to the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, and they washed their garments white. How this ought to assist us to feel that albeit our pathway is one in which we meet with innumerable temptations, yet inasmuch as all the glorified have come up white and clean from it, by virtue of the atoning blood, even so shall we!

But I want to conduct you a little further into the central meaning of the text. Brethren, their garments came to be white through a miracle of grace, through nothing less than a miracle of grace because they came through the great tribulation, where everything tended to defile them. The word “the” ought to have been in the translation: it is marvellous how the translators came to leave it out: the text should read, “These are they which come out of the great tribulation.” Note, also, that the half Latin word “tribulation,” upon which so many dwell as signifying threshing, is not in the Greek, but is merely a transla-

tor's word, and therefore not to be insisted on. The original signifies simply oppression and affliction of any sort. Now, all the children of God have had to go through the great oppression and to endure its ills. What am I driving at? I will show you. I do not think that the text refers to some one great persecution, but to the great conflict of the ages in which the seed of the serpent perpetually molests and oppresses the seed of the woman. The strife began at the gates of Eden when the Lord said to the serpent, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed: he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Satan takes care to nibble at the heel, though his own head has been broken by our great Lord. There is an hereditary conflict, a great tribulation, always to be suffered by the saints below, for he that is born after the flesh persecutes him that is born after the spirit. The enmity takes all sorts of shapes, but from the beginning even until now it is in the world. Now, the white robed ones had come out of that continuous and general conflict uninjured: like the three holy children who came out of the furnace with not so much as the smell of fire upon them. Some of them had been slandered: men of the world had thrown handfuls of the foulest mud upon them, but they washed their robes and made them white. Others of them had come out of remarkable temptations from men and devils: Satan himself had poured his blasphemies into their ears, so that they verily thought they should themselves blaspheme; they were tried by the most defiling of temptations, but they overcame through the blood of the Lamb, and were delivered from every polluting trace of the temptation by the efficacy of the atoning sacrifice. Some of them were persecuted cruelly, and trodden down as mire in the streets, and yet they rose to glory white as snow. They went through fire and through water, and wandered without a certain dwelling-place; they were made to be as the offscouring of all things, but they

came uninjured and unspotted out of it all. I would have you look upon the text as an exclamation of surprise uttered by the elder to John, as they both mentally looked down upon the great struggle going on in the world below, where temptations and trials of all sorts surround the chosen company of the church militant. They watched the warring band and marked that a goodly host of men, though they fought in the thick of the battle and were covered with dust and had their garments rolled in blood, yet instead of perishing on the battle field, as they seemed to do, came up out of it, came up wearing spotless and shining garments. Here was the wonder of it that they were white after such a trial. I have heard this text used as if the great tribulation had assisted in purifying them, whereas it was that which would have in itself defiled them, it was that which by its own natural operation tended to make them foul: the marvel was that they came out of it and washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Now let me conduct you into the thought which we have at this moment laid before you, namely, that it was by the operation of the blood of Christ, and by nothing else, that the glorified saints were made clean. They came out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Tribulation, or affliction, or oppression, call it which you will, is overruled by a miracle of divine grace so as to benefit the believer, but in and of itself it is not the cleanser but the defiler of the soul. Affliction of itself does not sanctify anybody, but the reverse. I believe in sanctified afflictions, but not in sanctifying afflictions. Afflictions of themselves arouse the evil which is in us to an unwonted energy, and place us in positions where the rebellious heart is incited to forsake the Lord. This will be seen if we consider the matter closely. The great tribulation of which I have to speak is, under some aspects of it, a sin-creating thing, and if the victorious

ones had not perpetually gone to the blood they would never have had their garments white; it was that alone which made and kept them white, they were familiar with the atonement and knew its cleansing power

Brethren, some of the trials of the saints are evidently intended by those who are the instruments of them to make them sin. Satan and wicked men assail the saints with this as their end and aim. Satan, for instance, when he tried Job did it with the distinct intention of causing him to curse God to his face. He did not at all veil his intent even before the throne of God, but boldly avowed it, and said, "Put forth now thy hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face." The Lord had far other designs, but the object of the affliction as far as Satan was concerned was to remove Job from his integrity, and cause him to blaspheme. Satan is very wise, and he knows, if we do not, that affliction is an admirable instrument for his purpose, and so much tends to make a man sin that if he does not fly to the blood of Jesus to counteract the tendency of the tribulation he will speedily fall. What would Job have done had he not known that his Redeemer lived? As it is with the prince of tempters so is it with those who serve him, they vex the saints in order to make them sin. When ungodly men persecute the children of God, whether it be by scoffing at them, or by injuring them in their estates or persons, their direct object is make them renounce their religion, and forsake Christ; or if this cannot be done, they aim at making them dishonour their profession by sin. Has not this been the real object of all persecution, from the days of the chief priests and Pharisees even until now? If they can make the saints sin, their end is gained. So that that part of the great tribulation which comes from Satan and the world is directly designed to make us sin against the Lord. The saints of God are preserved from the great transgression, and wherein the influence of these troubles

does make them sin, as it made Job sin in a certain way, and as no doubt it caused the martyrs many a secret sin, even though they were triumphant over death: as for this, I say they are cleansed from it by the blood of the Lamb, and so the machinations of the enemy are defeated at every point.

Tribulation of any kind is pretty sure to make us feel the need of the precious blood, because it brings sin to remembrance. The widow of Sarepta said to the prophet, "Art thou come to bring my sin to remembrance and to slay my son?" Some sins never trouble the conscience until trial shows them up, and makes the heart tender about them. Trouble like a strong electric light casts another colour over the formerly dark scene, and we discover what we had forgotten. Trials work a degree of tenderness of spirit, and so make sin conspicuous to the weeping eye, and to the troubled heart. Many a man when in great trouble about other matters has also begun to be in deep distress on account of sin. And oh, dear friend, if thou art passing through any portion of the great tribulation, and its effect upon thee is to make thine old sins come up before thee, fly to the blood, I pray thee! That is the only way by which thy faith can keep her hold. You can only believe in a sin pardoning God by going to the cleansing fountain; for when sin is vividly seen pardon is known to be impossible except through the divine atonement.

Tribulation has a tendency to create, even in good men, new sins: sins into which they have never fallen before. "Brother," thou sayest, "I shall never repine against God." How knowest thou that? Thou sayest, "I have never done so unto this hour." I answer, why shouldst thou have done so? Hath not the Lord set a hedge about thee and all that thou hast— why shouldst thou repine? Are not thy wife and children about thee? Art thou not in health and strength? Why, then, shouldst thou murmur? There is small credit in being satisfied when you

have all that you want. But suppose the Lord were to strip thee of all these things, O man, I fear me thou mightest murmur as others have done before thee, and the sin of rebellion to which thou hast been a stranger might yet triumph over thee. Art thou better than others? Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. You will need to wash your robes even as others have done.

In some men tribulation ivorys a very fierce temptation to distrust Ah, we think we have a deal of faith until we want it, and then when the time comes we who have taught faith to others find that we have little enough ourselves. Ah, how unbelief will insinuate itself, and defy us to drive it out. Sharper and blacker doubts than we dare speak of will come, such as "Is there a providence. Is there a God?" Ah, we must away to the blood, or else this tribulation will drive us into atheistic questions and cover us with horrible sins which will dishonour God and wound ourselves.

Tribulation, too, has a wonderful tendency to stir up all the old sins. While things go well with us, that cage of unclean birds will hardly peep or chatter, but affliction comes and stirs them all up, and how horribly they hoot and call to each other. Ah, my perfect brother, you do not know what a host of devils nestle inside your bosom. Whenever I hear a brother talk of ceasing from conflict, I think how quiet the devils in his soul are keeping, and how they are chuckling at his folly. Sins swarm most where pride swears that there are none. There is an ocean of sin within the heart of any one of us, and it only wants a trouble to stir the polluted mass, and we shall see what it is like. Just put you, who are so very good in your own esteem, into certain positions, and your mighty fine holiness will crack and blister like so much varnish in the sun. There lies lurking in the soul even of the most sanctified believer before he gets to heaven enough of sin to set the world on a blaze, and it only

wants a fierce breach of strong temptation to set the embers, which seemed as if they were all quenched, blazing away like Nebuchadnezzar's furnace. The fire of sin would soon bum our souls to destruction if Christ did not interfere. See, then, my brethren, we must hasten away to the blood of atonement. You see how the two things are mentioned together—the tribulation and the blood-washing; and they must go together or else there will be no white robe for us at last, no character which will stand the gaze of the thrice holy Lord. The product of tribulation by itself mil not be a white robe, but washing in the blood will give us that honourable array. Let us seek continually to have the atoning blood applied to cleanse our souls from the stains which tribulation is sure to make.

So, too, beloved brethren, great trials are wonderfully apt to reveal the weakness of our graces and the number of our infirmities. It is sure to make the believer see what an unbeliever he is, to make the man who is full of love see how little he loves, to make the child of patience find out how impatient he is, to make the strong learn his weakness and the wise man learn his folly. Ah, captain, thou art a wise mariner, so thou thinkest and so thou art in a moderate squall or in even an ordinary storm, but if the Lord were to let loose all his winds against thee, I tell thee what thou wouldst do,— thou wouldst reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man, and be at thy wits' end. Think of that. Those who have never done business on deep waters do not understand this. Your pleasure yachts which run between the islands, and up the rivers, and in and out of the creeks, know nothing about storms, and their crews are quite able to handle a vessel, so they say, but Atlantic storms would soon take the conceit out of them. Believe me, when a whirlwind takes the ship and twists her round, and plays with her as with a toy, seafaring becomes no amusement. When the barque mounts to heaven and then goes down into the abyss, it melts

the soul because of heaviness, and forces a man to cry out for mercy. Spiritual storms make a man discover what utter weakness he is, and then he is wise to fly to the blood of the Lamb. Oh, what a sweet restorative is found in the atoning sacrifice! God in Christ Jesus reconciled to me by the blood once shed for many is my great joy! How the soul seems to get rid of all the mischief which tribulation otherwise would breed in her, when she bathes in that sacred fount. Then, indeed, she puts on her white robes and chants a victorious song.

III. Now, thirdly, WHAT LESSON COMES OUT OF THIS? What is the teaching of the passage? The teaching is this, beloved, that when we are in tribulation then is the time to have the most diligent dealings with the precious blood of the Lamb.

I would say to you, first, meditate on it. A sight of Christ in his agony is a wondrous cure for our agonies. That crown of thorns about thy head, O my Master, this shall ease my throbbing brow; those eyes so red with weeping, shall look consolation into my soul; thy cheeks bestained with spittle shall make me forget the reproach I bear for thy sake. When I see thee, thyself, stripped naked and hung up on the cross, the sight will make me think highly of being slandered and persecuted for thy sake! What are our griefs compared to his? On the table of sorrow they place the little drinking cups for us little children; but for our great elder brother, what a flagon did they set for him! Yet he drank it, saying, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." When we see the elder brother drinking of the same cup as ourselves it makes us cheerfully put ours to our lip, and pledge him in fellowship. "O Lord Jesus, shall we refuse what thou dost take! Nay, glorious brother of our souls, we will be true brothers; we will prove our fellowship in this sad communion, and drink with thee of thy cup, and be baptised with thy baptism." So, you see, meditation on the blood of Jesus helps us

in our tribulation by letting us see how much greater his woe was than ours.

Another sweet consolation grows out of our subject is this—we see how great his love was to us. Perhaps he has seen fit to smite us, and we think him angry; but we know he loves us, because we see him bleed. If you will only follow Christ through Gethsemane, and watch him for a while on Calvary, and watching with him for one hour, begin to taste his sufferings, you will say, “My Master, oh, how thou lovest me. I perceive that thine is love which many waters cannot quench, which death itself cannot drown. Then if thou lovest me so thou lovest me even in this my affliction, and I will rejoice in it. I cannot doubt thy love, for thy blood seals the truth of it; and therefore am I confident under thy chastening hand.

Meditation also comforts us when we follow another line of reflection and say within ourselves— Jesus triumphed,— and how? By suffering! The victories of Christ were not obtained by crushing others, but by being crushed himself. His way to the throne was downward through the grave. He shows us the power of weakness and the sublimity, of suffering ridicule. Though here rejected, despised, and made nothing of, he is now exalted above all principalities and powers. Well, then, the heart argues, so shall I be honoured and glorified by suffering. If I endure patiently and hold on my way, flying still to the precious blood, I shall in my weakness find my strength, in my sense of sinfulness I shall find purity in Christ, and in death shall find my everlasting life. So you see there is something even in meditating upon the blood of the Lamb.

But, beloved, the chief thing is this,— in all times of tribulation the great matter is to have the blood of Christ actually applied to the soul. If thou lie as oak in the atonement, if thou put thy broken heart to sleep on the breast of Christ, hard by his wound, thou wilt get peace by this method better than by

any other. "How so?" says one. Why, if the blood be applied to the conscience it will breathe such peace through the soul, such sweet peace, that nothing else will be able to ruffle and disturb you. I have known in hospitals where there have been foul gases and ill smells that they have burned choice herbs and odoriferous plants, and so have killed the noxious odours with sweet perfumes. Oh for a little of Christ's blood sprinkled in the chambers of the soul! It is better than frankincense or calamus; it will make death sweet, and cause the chamber of affliction to smell deliciously with Christ's precious name. If sin be pardoned I am secure; if Christ stands in my stead, and his precious blood pleads for me, I am content to lie down at his feet, and say, "Do what thou wilt now thou hast pardoned me! Do what thou wilt, Lord, for I am forgiven!" Such is the peace-giving power of the blood.

When the blood is applied to the soul there is another gracious result: it takes the sting out of affliction by making us know that there is nothing penal in it. If Christ was punished in my stead for my sin, then I never can be punished for my sin, and therefore whatever I may have to endure daily by way of trial or suffering, there is no punishment in it. There may be the Father's loving and wise chastisement, and doubtless so there is, but there is never a punishment such as a judge inflicts as a penalty for transgression. God bringeth no charge against his people,—how can he? It is he that justifies them: and as he has no charge to bring, certainly he never inflicts a punishment. Who is he that condemneth since Christ hath died? Are we not strengthened to bear the tribulation when we know that it does not come upon us as a punishment for sin? Our Father's providence has no wrath in it, or if it has wrath at all it is that "little wrath" we read of in Isaiah,— "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee."

And, oh, brethren, if the blood of Christ be applied to the soul (and let us ask that it may, whether we are in great tribulation or not), we are assured that the end will be glorious. We are all in the great tribulation in one way or other, we are fighting and contending, and must do so to the end, but that end is guaranteed to us: the blood of Jesus Christ gives us a sweet assurance that it is all well with us, and shall be well with us for ever, and so it opens the gates of heaven to us, and cries, "Courage! courage! The battle is sharp, but it will soon be over, and there awaits for you a victor's crown." May not the soldier lift up his head, and wipe his face from the sweat of battle, and say, "Then I will fight it through; yes, in God's name I will fight it through. What though this wound seemed to have stunned me for a moment, and almost cleft my skull, I will fight it through if such be the promise and the reward. I will stir my soul, and the Holy Spirit shall arouse it, to put on a noble daring, and on I will go to win for Christ. Well may I bear his cross since he prepares my crown." That is the sweet effect of the blood, and I ask that every one here of us, tried or not, may feel it now to the praise and glory of his grace. O divine Spirit, grant us this grace.

What do you do, I wonder, who have not the blood of Christ to flee to? Ah, what do you do in time of sorrow who have no Christ to help you? I will ask you that question, and leave it to ring through your souls. Remember, when you feel you need him, my Lord is ready, for the fountain is still opened for sin and for uncleanness. You have but to wash and be clean. A simple faith will obtain complete purification from all sin. God grant you may believe in Jesus at once.

Amen.

THIRTY-FIVE
THE BLISS OF THE GLORIFIED

SERMON #3499

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 7:16

SERMON GIVEN ON AUGUST 13, 1871.

*"They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any
more, neither shall the sun light on them,
nor any heat."*

REVELATION 7:16.

WE cannot too often turn our thoughts heavenward, for *this is one of the great cures for worldliness*. The way to liberate our souls from the bonds that tie us to earth is to strengthen the cords that kind us to heaven. You will think less of this poor little globe when you think more of the world to come. This contemplation will also serve *to console us for the loss*, as we call it, *of those who have gone before*. It is their gain, and we will rejoice in it. We cannot have a richer source of consolation than this, that they who have fallen asleep in Christ have not

perished; they have not lost life, but they have gained the fullness of it. They are rid at all that molests us here, and they enjoy more than we as yet can imagine. Cheer your hearts, ye mourners, by looking up to the gate of pearl, by looking up—to those who day without night surround the throne of their Redeemer. It will also *tend to quicken our diligence* if we think much of heaven. Suppose I should miss it after all! What if I should not so run that I may obtain! If heaven be little, I shall be but a little loser by losing it; but if it be indeed such that the half could never be told us, then, may God grant us diligence to make our calling and election sure, that we may be certain of entering into this rest, and may not be like the many who came out of Egypt, but who perished in the wilderness and never entered into the promised land. All things considered, I know of no meditation that is likely to be more profitable than a frequent consideration of the rest which remaineth for the people of God. I ask, then, for a very short time that your thoughts may go upward to the golden streets.

And, first, we shall think a little of *the blessedness of the saints* as described in the simple words of our text; then we will say a few words as to *how they came by that felicity*; and thirdly, *draw some practical lessons from it*. First, then, we have here:—

I. A DESCRIPTION OF THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE GLORIFIED.

We have not the full description of it here; but we have here a description of certain *evils from which they are free*. You notice they are of two or three kinds—first, *such as originate within*—"They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more"—they

are free from inward evils; secondly, *such as originate without*—"Neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." They are altogether delivered from the results of outward circumstances. Take the first: "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more." We are never so to strain Scripture for a spiritual sense as to take away its natural sense, and hence we will begin by saying this is no doubt to be understood physically of the body they will have in glory. Whether there will be a necessity for eating and drinking in heaven, we will not say, for we are not told, but anyhow it is met by the text, "The Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them"—if they need food—"and lead them to living fountains of water" if they need to drink. Whatever may be the necessities of the future, those necessities shall never cause a pang. Here, the man who is hungry may have to ask the question, "What shall I eat?"; the man who is thirsty may have to say, "What shall I drink?"; and we have all to ask, "Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" But such questions shall never arise there. They are abundantly supplied. Children of God have been hungry here: the great Son of God, the head of the household was hungry before them; and they need not wonder if they have fellowship with him in this suffering. Children of God have had to thirst here: their great Lord and Master said, "I thirst"; they need not wonder, therefore, if in his affliction they have to take some share. Should not they who are to be like their head in heaven be conformed unto him on earth? But up yonder there is no poverty, and there shall be no accident that shall place them in circumstances of distress. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more."

While we take this physically, there is no doubt that *it is to be understood mentally*. Our minds are also constantly the victims of hungerings and thirstings. There are on earth various kinds of this hunger and thirst—in a measure evil, in a measure also innocent. There are many men that in this world are

hungering after wealth, and the mouth of avarice can never be filled. It is as insatiable as the horse-leech, and for ever cries, "Give, give!" But such hunger was never known in heaven, and never can be, for they are satisfied there; they have all things and abound. All their enlarged capacities can desire they already possess, in being near the throne of God and beholding his glory; there is no wealth which is denied them. Here, too, some of the sons of men hunger *after fame*, and oh! what have not men done to satisfy this? It is said that breaks through stone walls; certainly ambition has done it. Death at the cannon's mouth has been a trifle, if a man might win the bubble reputation. But in heaven there is no such hunger as that. Those who once had it, and are saved, scorn ambition henceforth. And what room would there be for ambition in the skies? They take their crowns and cast them at their Saviour's feet. They have their palm-branches, for they have won the victory, but they ascribe the conquest to the Lamb, their triumph to his death. Their souls are satisfied with his fame. The renown of Christ has filled their spirit with everlasting contentment. They hunger no more, nor thirst any more, in that respect. And oh! what hunger and thirst there has been on earth by those of tender and large heart *for a fit object of love!* I mean not now the common thing called "love," but the friendship which is in man's heart, and sends out its tendrils wanting something to which to cling. We must—we are born and created for that very purpose—we must live together, we cannot develop ourselves alone. And oftentimes a lonely spirit has yearned for a brother's ear, into which to pour its sorrows; and doubtless many a man has been brought to destruction and been confined to the lunatic asylum whose reason might have been saved had there been some sympathetic spirit, some kind, gentle heart that would have helped to bear his burden. Oh! the hunger and the thirst of many a soul after a worthy object of confidence. But

they hunger and they thirst, up there, no more. Their love is all centred on their Saviour. Their confidence, which they reposed in him on earth, is still in him. He is their bosom's Lord, their heart's Emperor, and they are satisfied, and, wrapped up in him, they hunger and they thirst no more.

And how many young spirits there are on earth that are *hungering after knowledge* who would fain get the hammer and break the rock, and find out the history of the globe in the past. They would follow philosophy, if they could, to its source, and find out the root of the matter. Oh! to know, to know, to know! The human mind pants and thirsts for this. But there they know even as they are known. I do not know that in heaven they know all things—that must be for the Omniscient only—but they know all they need or really want to know; they are satisfied there. There will be no longer searching with a spirit that is ill at ease. They may, perhaps, make progress even there, and the scholar may become daily more and more wise; but there shall never be such a hungering and thirsting as to cause their mental faculties the slightest pang. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more. Oh! blessed land where the seething ocean of man's mind is hushed, and sleeps in everlasting calm! Oh! blessed country where the hungry spirit, that crieth every hour for bread, and yet for more, and yet for more, and spends its labour for that which satisfieth not, shall be fed with the bread of angels, and be satisfied with favour and full of the goodness of the Lord.

But, dear friends, surely the text also means *our spiritual hungering and thirsting*. "Blessed is the man that hungers and thirst to-day after righteousness, for he shall be filled." This a kind of hunger that we ought to desire to have; this is a sort of thirst that the more you have of it will be the indication of the possession of more grace. On earth it is good for saints to hunger and to thirst spiritually, but up there they have done

even with that blessed hunger and that blessed thirst. Today, beloved, some of us are *hungering after holiness*. Oh! what would I not give to be holy, to be rid of sin, of every evil thing about me! My eyes—ah! adieu sweet light, if I might also say, "Adieu sin! "My mouth—ah! well would I be content to be dumb if I might preach by a perfect life on earth! There is no faculty I know of that might not be cheerfully surrendered if the surrender of it would deprive us of sin. But they never thirst for holiness in heaven, for this excellent reason, that they are without fault before the throne of God. Does it not make your mouth water? Why this is the luxury of heaven to be perfect. Is not this—the heaven of heaven, to be clean rid of the root and branch of sin, and not a rag or bone, or piece of a bone of our old depravity left—all gone like our Lord, made perfect without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. And here, too, brethren and sisters, we very rightly hunger and thirst *after full assurance and confidence*. Many are hungering after it; they hope they are saved, and they thirst to be assured that they are. But there is no such thirst as that in heaven, for, having crossed the golden threshold of Paradise, no saint ever asks himself, "Am I saved?" They see his face without a cloud between; they bathe in the sea of his love; they cannot question that which they perpetually enjoy. So, too, on earth I hope we know what it is to hunger and thirst *for fellowship with Christ*. Oh! when he is gone from us—if he do but hide his face from us, how we cry, "My soul desires thee in the night"! We cannot be satisfied unless we have the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. But in heaven they have no such thing. There the shepherd is always with the Sheep, the King is ever near them, and because of his perpetual presence their hungering and their thirsting will be banished for ever. Thus much upon those evils, then, that would arise from within. As they are perfect, whatever comes

from within is a source of pleasure to them, and never of pain.

And now, dear friends, *the evils that come from without*: let us think of them. We no doubt can appreciate in some measure, though not to the degree which we should if we were in Palestine in the middle of summer—we can appreciate the words, "Neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." This signifies that nothing external shall injure the blessed. Take it literally. There shall be nothing in the surroundings of heavenly saints that shall cause glorified spirits any inconvenience. I think we may take it mainly in relation to the entire man glorified; and so let us say that on earth the sun lights on us and many heats in the form of affliction. What *heats of affliction* some here have passed through! Why there are some here who are seldom free from physical pain. There are many of the best of God's children that, if they get an hour without pain, are joyful indeed. There are others that have had a great fight of affliction Through poverty they have fought hard. They have been industrious, but somehow or other God has marked them out for the scant tables and the thread-worn garments. They are the children of poverty, and the furnace heat is very hot about them. With others it has been repeated deaths of those they have loved. Ah! how sad is the widow's case! How deep the grief of the fatherless! How great the sorrow of bereaved parents! Sometimes the arrows of God fly one after the other; first one falls and then another until we think we shall hardly have one left. These are the heats of the furnace of affliction. And at other times these take the form of ingratitude from children. I think we never ought to repine so much about the death of a child as about the ungodly life of a child. A dead cross is very heavy, but a living cross is heavier far. Many a mother has had a son of whom she might regret that he did not die even the very hour of his birth, for he has lived to be the grief of his

parents, and a dishonour to their name. These are sharp trials—these heats—but you shall have done with them soon. "Neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." No poverty, no sickness, no bereavement, no ingratitude—nothing of the kind. They for ever rest from affliction. Heat sometimes comes in another form—in *the matter of temptation*. Oh! how some of God's people have been tried—tried by their flesh! Their constitution, perhaps, has been hot, impulsive, and they have been carried off their feet, or would have been but for the interposing grace of God, many and many a time. They have been tempted, too, in their position, and they of their own household have been their enemies. They have been tempted by their peculiar circumstances; their feet have almost gone many a time. And they have been tempted by the devil; and hard work it is to stand against Satanic insinuations. It is hot, indeed, when his fiery darts fly. Oh! when we shall have once crossed the river, how some of us who have been much tempted will look back upon that old dog of hell, and laugh him to scorn because he will not be able even to bark at us again! Then we shall be for ever free from him. He worries us now because he would devour us, but there, as he cannot devour, so shall he not even worry us. "Neither shall the sun " of temptation " light on them, nor any heat." Happy are the people that are in such a case. The *heats of persecution* have often, too, carried about the saints. It is the lot of God's people to be tried in this way. Through much tribulation of this sort they inherit the kingdom; but there are no Smithfields in heaven, and no Bonners to light up the faggots, no Inquisitions in heaven, no slanderers there to spoil the good man's name. They shall never have the heat of persecution to suffer again. And, once more, they shall not have *the heat of care*. I do not know that we need have it, even here; but there are a great many of God's people who allow care to get very hot about them. Even while sitting in this place to-

night while the hymn was going up, "What must it be to be there! " the thoughts of some of you have been going away to your business, or your home. While we are trying to preach and draw your attention upwards, perhaps some housewife is thinking of something she has left out which ought to have been looked up before she came away, or wondering where she left the key. We make any excuses for care through the cares we continually invent, forgetting the words, "Cast all your care on him. for he careth for you." But they have no cares in heaven. "They hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." Ah! good man, there shall be no ships at sea by-and-bye—no harvests—to trouble you as to whether the good weather will last! Ah! good woman, you shall have no more children that are sickly to fret over, for there you will have all you desire, and be in a family circle that is unbroken, for all the brothers and sisters of God's family shall by-and-bye be there, and so you shall be eternally blest.

We have thus opened up as well as we could the words of the text on the felicity of the saints. Now, very briefly:—

II. How DO THEY CAME TO BE HAPPY?

Well, it is quite clear that they did not come to it because they were very fortunate people on earth, for if you read another passage of the Word of God you will find, "These are they that came out of great tribulation." Those that have had trial and suffering on earth are amongst those that have the bliss of heaven. Encourage yourselves, you poor and suffering ones. It is quite certain they did not come there from their own merit, for we read, they have "washed their robes"—they wanted washing. They did not keep them always undefiled. There had been spots upon them. They came there not because they deserved to be there, but because of the rich grace of God. How did they

come there then? Well, first, they came there *through the lamb that was slain*. He bore the sun and the heat, and, therefore, the sun doth not light on them, nor any heat. The hot sun of Jehovah's justice shone full upon the Saviour—scorched, and burned, and consumed him with grief and anguish; and because the Saviour suffered, therefore we suffer it no more. All our hopes of heaven are found at the cross.

But they came there next *because the Saviour shed his blood*. They washed their robes in it. Faith linked them to the Saviour. The fountain would not have cleansed their robes if they had not washed in it. Oh! there shall be none come to heaven but such as have by faith embraced what God provides. Dear hearer, judge thyself whether thou art right, therefore. Hast thou washed thy robe and made it white in the Lamb's blood? Is Christ all in all to thee? If not, canst thou hope to be there? And they are there in perfect bliss, we are told. No sun lights on them, nor any heat, because the Lamb in the midst of the throne is with them. How could they be unhappy who see Christ? Is not this the secret of their bliss, that Jesus fully reveals himself to them?

And besides, *they have the love of God to enjoy*, for the last word of the chapter is, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." The blood of Jesus applied, the presence of Jesus enjoyed, and the love of God fully revealed—these are the causes of the bliss of the saved in heaven. But we must close our meditation with the last point, which is:—

III. WHAT THIS TEACHES US.

First, the bliss of the saved in glory teaches us *to long for it*. It is legitimate to long for heaven—not to long to escape from doing our duty here. It is idleness to be always wanting to have done with this world—it is clear sloth—but to be longing to be where

Jesus is, is only natural and gracious. Should not the child long to go home from the school? Should not the captive pine for liberty? Should not the traveller in foreign lands long to see his native country? Should not the bride, the married wife, when she has been long away from her husband, long to see his face? If you did not long for heaven, surely you might question whether heaven belonged to you. If you have ever tasted of the joys of the saints, as believers do on earth, you will sing with full soul:—

*"My thirsty spirit faints
To reach the land I love
The bright inheritance of saints,
Jerusalem above"*

You may long for this.

And the next lesson is, be patient until you get there. As it will be such a blessed place when you arrive, don't trouble about the difficulties of the way. You know our hymn:—

"The way may be rough, but it cannot be long."

So

"Let us fill it with hope, and cheer it with song."

You know how well your horse goes when you turn its head homewards. Perhaps you had to flog him a bit before, but when he begins to know he is going down the long lane which leads home he will soon lift up his ears, and away, away he will go. We ought to have as much sense as horses. Our heads are turned towards heaven We are steering towards that port—homeward bound. It may be rough weather but we shall soon

be in the fair haven where not a wave of trouble shall ever disturb us again. Be patient, be patient. The husbandman has waited for the precious fruits of the earth; you can well wait for the precious things of heaven. You sow in tears, but you shall reap in joy. He has promised you a harvest. He who cannot lie has said the seed-time and harvest shall never cease. They do not cease below; depend upon it, they won't cease above. There is a harvest for you who have been sowing here below.

Our first lesson, then, is, long for this, and then be patient in waiting. But our next lesson is to be, wait your appointed time. And now the next instruction is, *make much of faith*. They entered heaven because they had washed their robes in blood. Make much of the blood and much of the faith by which you have washed. Dear hearers, have you all got faith? It is, as it were, the key of blessedness. "But all men have not faith," says the Apostle. Hast thou faith? Dost thou believe in Christ Jesus? In other words, dost thou trust thyself alone with him? Can you sing with our poet:—

*"Nothing in my hand I bring
Simply to thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to thee for dress,
Helpless, look to thee for grace.
Foul, I to the fountain fly,
Wash me, Saviour, or I die?"*

Make much of the faith that will admit you to heaven.

Once more, our text teaches us this lesson—Do any of us want to know what heaven is on earth? Most of us will say, "Aye" to that. Well then, the text tells you *how to find heaven on earth*. You find it in the same way as they find it in heaven. First, be thou washed in the blood of Christ, and that will be a great help towards happiness on earth. It will give thee peace

now, "the peace of God that passeth all understanding." Some people think that heaven on earth is to be found in the theatre, and in the ballroom, and in the giddy haunts of fashion. Well, it may be heaven to some, but if God has any love to you, it won't be heaven to you. Wash your robe, therefore, in the Saviour's blood, and there will be the beginning of heaven on earth.

Then next, it appears, if you read the connection of our text, that those who enjoy heaven serve God day and night in his temple. If you want heaven on earth, serve God continually day and night. Having washed your robe first, then put it on, and go out to serve God. Idle Christians are often unhappy Christians I have met with many a spiritual dyspeptic always full of doubts and fears. Is there a young man here full of doubts and fears who has lost the light he once possessed, and the joy he once had? Dear brother, get to work. In cold weather the best way to be warm is not to get before a fire, but to work. Exercise gives a healthy glow, even amidst the frost. "I am doing something," says one. Yes, with one hand; use the other hand. "Perhaps I should have too many irons in the fire," says one. You cannot have too many. Put them all in, and blow the fire with all the bellows you can get. I do not believe any Christian man works too hard, and, as a rule, if those who kill themselves in Christ's service were buried in a cemetery by themselves, it would be a long while before it would get filled. Work hard for Christ. It makes happy those who are in heaven to serve God day and night, and it will make you happy on earth. Do all you can. Another way is to have fellowship with Christ here. Read again this chapter. "He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them—he shall feed them." Oh! if you want to be happy, live near to Jesus. Poor men are not poor when Christ lives in their house. Truly, sick men have their beds made easy when Christ is there. Has he not said, "I will make his bed in all his sickness"? Only get fellowship with Jesus, and outward circum-

stances won't distress you. The sun will not light on you, nor any heat. You will be like the shepherd on Salisbury Plain, who said it was good weather, though it rained hard. "It is weather," said he, "that pleases me." "How so?" said a traveller to him. "Well, sir," he said, "it pleases God, and what pleases God pleases me." "Good day!" said one to a Christian man. "I never had a bad day since I was converted," said he. "They are all good now since Christ is my Saviour." Do you not see, then, that if your wishes are subdued, if you do not hunger any more, or thirst any more as you used to do, and if you always live near to Christ, you will begin to enjoy heaven on earth. Begin, then, the heavenly life here below. The Bible says, "For he hath raised us up, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." The way to live on earth, according to many, is to live on earth, but to look upward to heaven. That is a good way of living, but I will tell you a better, and that is to live in heaven, and look down on earth. The Apostle had learned that when he said, "Our conversation is in heaven." It is good to be on earth, and look up to heaven; it is better for the mind to be in heaven, and to look down upon earth. May we learn that secret. The Lord lead us into it. Then when faith is strong, and love is ardent, and hope is bright, we shall sing, with Watts:—

*"The men of grace have found
 Glory begun below;
 Celestial fruits on earthly ground
 From faith and hope may grow."*

The Lord grant you a participation in this bliss, beloved, and an abundant entrance into that bliss for ever, for Jesus Christ's sake.

Amen.

THIRTY-SIX
HEAVEN BELOW

SEPTEMBER 21, 1884

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 7:16-17

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 30

“They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters.”

REVELATION 7:16-17

LET us think of this felicity, that we may be comforted in the prospect of it. All this is already enjoyed by tens of thousands of the redeemed. Some of those who were very dear to us on earth, whose faith we desire to follow, are now for ever with the Lord, and this is their joyful portion — “They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on

them, nor any heat." Our comfort lies in the sweet reflection that we are journeying to this goodly land. This divine inheritance is ours: we have the seal of the Holy Spirit upon our title-deeds; we have tasted of the grapes of its Eshcol; we already rejoice in the light and warmth of its celestial city to which we draw near. In a little time we shall be actually within the gate of pearl, and shall know in an instant infinitely more of its glory than an apostle could teach us here below. We are like to one who hath in his hand the guide-book of a country to which he is journeying; he finds in it fair pictures of the scenery of the land and the architecture of the cities, and as he reads each page he says to himself, "I am going there! This is what I shall soon behold!" It would be a wretched thing to have such a book in one's hand and to be entering upon a life-long banishment from home and the home-country. Then should we have to say, "This was my country once, but I shall never see it again. Fair are its skies and lovely are its vales, but mine eye shall ache in vain to gaze upon them. I am exiled for ever from my own dear land!" It is not so with us who are believers in Christ: our faces are towards Immanuel's land, the land which floweth with milk and honey, and we have a portion among the blessed; a mansion is being made ready for each one of us, and we have this promise: "Go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." Rejoice, then, beloved, for if your portion on earth be slender, if your condition here be sorrowful, if your trials multiply, if your strength declines, yet it is but a little while and he that will come shall come, and shall not tarry. Well doth our hymn tell us that—

"An hour with our Lord will make up for it all."

We shall forget the pains of a long life in one half-hour of the vision of the Well-beloved. Wherefore, comfort one another

with these words. Look before you. It is brightness beyond though it be darkness here. Anticipate your sure reward, it cometh with all speed. I speak but sober truth; it seems but a day's journey from this spot to the heavenly highlands. It is so little a while since I was a boy, and yet in less space I shall be with God. It seems but a few days to you who are aged people since you climbed your mother's knee, and yet in far less time you will behold the face of your soul's Bridegroom. Then all trouble will be ended, and eternal joy will crown your head.

But I want you to do this morning, and by God's grace I think we shall accomplish it, a little more than receive comfort. I long that we may "sit together in the heavenlies" even now. It seems to me that this world, if Christians lived as they should do, would become a nether heaven. The true Christian life, when we live near to God, is the rough draft of the life of full communion above. We have seen the artist make with his pencil, or with his charcoal, a bare outline of his picture. It is nothing more, but still one could guess what the finished picture will be from the sketch before you. One acquainted with the artist could see upon the canvas all the splendour of colour peeping through the dark lines of the pencil. Now, I want you to-day to see "the patterns of things in the heavens." We have much of heaven here; at any rate, we have the Lamb who is the glory of the eternal city; we have the presence of him that sits upon the throne among us even now; we have if not the perfect holiness of heaven, yet a justification quite as complete as that of the glorified; we have the "white robes," for "the blood of the Lamb" has washed them even now; and if we have not yet the palm branches of final victory, yet, thanks be to God, we are led in triumph in every place, and even now "this is the victory that over-cometh the world, even our faith." Therefore—

*"I would begin the music here,
And so my soul should rise;
Oh, for some heavenly notes to bear
My passions to the skies."*

Our voices are not clear as yet, they are half-choked with the fogs and smoke of earth. They will be perfectly attuned ere long; at any rate, let us go over the notes, and if we cannot reach to the full melody of the heavenly music, yet let us run up and down the scale, and try some easy passages. Come, let us worship, and adore, and rejoice as our departed ones are doing, and thus enjoy some of "the days of heaven upon the earth." That shall be my drift this morning, as the Holy Spirit shall instruct me.

I. Keeping to the text, however, I want to speak, first, of THE PERFECTION OF THE PROVISION which is enjoyed in heaven—"They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." This is the perfection of the provision.

I must, by your permission, go a little further back to make my description of this provision more complete. Notice the last sentence of the fifteenth verse: "He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them." In the reading we interpreted according to the Revised Version, which gives a more correct rendering: "He that sitteth on the throne shall spread his tabernacle over them." The glorified dwell under the shadow of God. It is for this reason that "the sun shall not light on them, nor any heat," because they dwell in God. Oh, what a dwelling-place that will be! You and I are often like Noah's dove, sent out flying over a weary waste, and finding no rest to the sole of our foot; but they dwell in the ark for ever. We go in and out and find pasture, but in that going in and out we are sometimes troubled; up yonder they "go no more out for ever," but eter-

nally behold the face of the King, and for ever dwell at God's right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore. Oh what a joy this must be in heaven, to be always within the circle of the eternal presence, which is always seen, always unclouded, always enjoyed! Such a dwelling means transformation, for none can dwell with God but those who are like him, free from sin, and perfect in holiness. We cannot abide in God for ever unless we are like him, and this in itself is boundless bliss. The abiding in the outspread pavilion of Jehovah will certify a similarity of sanctity and purity between the redeemed and the great Father who becomes their dwelling-place. The Lord shall tabernacle over his glorified people: he shall be their eternal home.

Next we are assured that they shall have all their necessities prevented. "They shall hunger no more." To be supplied when we hunger is the mercy of earth: never to hunger at all is the plenitude of heaven. God shall so fill the souls of his redeemed that they shall have no longings: their longings shall be prevented by their constant satisfaction. That which they enjoy will be more than they ever desired to enjoy, or ever imagined that they could be capable of enjoying. Imagination's utmost height never reached to the exceeding bliss and glory of the world to come. The saints confess in the glory that it never entered into their hearts to guess what God had prepared for them that love him. Heaven shall exceed all the desires of God's people; they shall not, even with their enlarged capacities, be able to wish for anything which they do not already possess; so that they shall hunger no more, in the sense that they shall never pant for more than they have.

They shall have done with the desires which it is right for them to have here—desires which intimate their present imperfection. Here it is their duty and their privilege to long after perfection, to be sighing and crying for a perfect deliverance

from every shade of sin; but they shall not sigh and cry for this in glory, for they shall be without fault before the throne of God. None of them shall cry, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" This on earth is one of the most deeply spiritual of cries, never heard from any but those whose sanctification is greatly advanced. None will ever utter that bitter exclamation but men like Paul, to whom the slightest speck of sin has a horror about it akin to death itself. Fanatical persons talk about being perfect; it is the talk of blind men: but those whose eyes have seen the Lord abhor themselves, and sigh and cry over what other men call failures, and mistakes, and infirmities. To them their heart sins and unseen faults are things to weep over; they have sharp hungerings and piercing thirsts after complete likeness to Christ. This likeness the saints possess before the throne; and they shall not thirst any more, even after this best and most desirable of attainments, since they shall enjoy it to the full.

Beloved, observe that, as they have no kind of hunger, so they have also no measure of thirst; that is to say, they have no needs, no unsatisfied wishes of any sort. In whatever form a need might approach them, it is excluded, for both hunger and thirst are shut out. Oh, brothers, it has been blessed to hunger and thirst after righteousness, what must that higher blessedness be which rises above even these holy desires!

We have wishes here which ought not to be gratified; these occasion us our sharpest pangs of hunger; but there they shall never know an unlawful wish, a wandering desire, or even an unwise longing. They shall have all things that a renewed heart can enjoy. All that their perfected nature can yearn after they shall possess: there shall be no unsatisfied craving of their manhood, neither their risen body nor their sanctified spirit shall be moved to hunger or thirst after any evil, for there shall be nothing about them which has a tendency that way. The

provision made for them shall be so absolutely complete that before they can desire any good thing they shall find it; before they know a need they shall have enjoyed the supply. This is wonderful! Yes, but all I can tell you is not the half of the truth.

Further, as we read we discover a third blessing, namely, that every overpowering influence is attempered; — “Neither shall the sun light on them.” What if by that “sun” is meant the full glory of God! If you and I could be introduced into the divine presence at once and as we are, the first result upon us must be a swoon, and the second must be death. We are not able to endure the blaze of Deity as yet; its glory would cause a sunstroke to the soul. We might well cry with good Mr. Walsh, “Hold, Lord! Hold! Remember I am but an earthen vessel, and I cannot as yet hold much of thee.” We are not prepared to endure the Lord as our Sun, in meridian splendour. In heaven they are able to endure the immediate presence of God, not only because of the Mediatorship of Christ, through whom the glory of God shines with tempered splendour upon the saints, but also because they themselves are strengthened. From all this earthly grossness quit, they are enabled to stand in that light to which no mortal man can now approach. To us even “our God is a consuming fire” while we are here; but in the saints there remaineth nothing to consume. The light of God is not too bright for eyes that Christ hath touched with heaven’s own eye-salve. The vision of the Infinite is not too glorious for those whom the Lord has prepared to be with him and to see his face. What John of Patmos could not bear, the weakest saint in heaven can endure, not for an hour, but for the whole stretch of eternity. Blessed, indeed, are they who shall behold the King in the ivory palaces above!

When it is added, “Nor any heat,” we learn that injurious influences shall cease to operate. By our surroundings here we are troubled with many heats. The very comforts of life, like

warm weather, tend to dry us up. A man may have gold, a man may have health, a man may have prosperity and honour till he is withered like the heath in the desert in the day of drought. Unless a dew from the Lord shall rest upon the branch of the prosperous he will be parched indeed. We have need of grace whenever God gives us blessings of a temporal kind. But no heat of that sort shall happen to saints in heaven: they can be rich, and honoured, and perfectly beautiful, and yet under no temptation to self-exaltation. Here the heats which are around us tend to fever us. Our fellow-men grow hot about this and that— the pursuit of wealth, the triumph of party politics, the honour of a family, and so forth; and we are all too apt to feel the common ague. Within ourselves, heats arise: unhealthy and unholy heats. We cannot go through this plague-smitten world altogether unscathed: every now and then we return to our quiet chamber, and feel that we have sickened, sickened in the company wherein we have tarried for an hour, sickened even in contact with those whom we sought to bless. Up yonder no fever shall burn the hearts of the glorified. Travelling through the wilderness of this world, on a sudden the hot sirocco of worldliness sweeps over us, laden with the burning dust of the desert, bearing death beneath its wings; God only can keep us in that evil hour; only as we lie on our faces before him can we hope to outlive the blast. Many are the temptations of this life: some of them soft and deceptive, others fierce and terrible; but up yonder no sirocco shall ever blow, and the inhabitant shall no more say, “I am sick.”

See, then, the perfect provision which is made by Christ for his saints above, and listen while we try to show that this same provision, in a modified way, lies to our hand even now. Come, beloved, do we not dwell in God? Do we not sing, “Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations”? If any of you believers have wandered away from your resting-place, whose

fault is that? Has not the Lord given you himself to be your perpetual pavilion? Has not Jesus said, "Abide in me"? Have you not sung in that sweet twenty-third Psalm, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever"? What more do you want? The Lord hath spread his tabernacle over you; you abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

Whenever you dwell in God and the Lamb feeds you, do you not also realize that next expression, "they shall hunger no more"? Can you not sing when Christ is with you and you dwell in God—

*"I thirst, but not as once I did,
The vain delights of earth to share;
Thy wounds, Immanuel, all forbid
That I should seek my pleasures there.
"It was the sight of thy dear cross
First wean'd my soul from earthly things:
And taught me to esteem as dross
The mirth of fools and pomp of kings."*

A child of God in communion with Christ would not lift his finger to possess a world, nor wink his eye to see all the pomp of kings, nor move a step to enjoy all the honours of rank, nor rise from sitting at Jesus' feet to learn all the wisdom of philosophy. He is already filled; what can he have more? The best of the best has fallen to his portion, and shall he change it? No; like the olive tree, he saith, "Should I leave my fatness, and go to be promoted over the trees?" and with the fig, he cries, "Should I forsake my sweetness, and go to be promoted over the trees?" He that eateth of the bread which Jesus gives him shall never hunger more after a painful sort. The husks of carnal joy have no attractions to the son who banquets at his father's table.

"Neither shall they thirst any more;" they shall feel that the

Lord Jesus is such an all-satisfying, all-sufficient portion that their desires can go no farther. I have sped across the sea with flying sails, bidding each gale waft me according to its will, hoping that I might somewhere find a port. Restlessly have I hastened to and fro, and been tossed up and down, the sport of every wave. My spirit has sped on and on through fair and foul, never abiding long in one stay. Happily there came a day when I found a fair haven. Down went my anchor; it took fast hold and held my barque. Under the lee of Calvary I found rest. How blow ye winds, or cease to blow as shall best please you. I stir not out to sea again. In the fair haven of the love of God in Christ Jesus shall my spirit abide for ever. If we could but reach this resolve, dear brethren, and hold to it, we should have no more anxieties and longings; we also should hunger no more, neither thirst any more.

And then how blessedly true it is to those who dwell in God and live near to Jesus that now the sun doth not light on them. God in his infinite majesty and holiness does not overwhelm us.

*"Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find;
The holy, just, and sacred Three
Are terrors to my mind.
"But if Immanuel's face appear,
My hope, my joy begins;
His love forbids my slavish fear,
His grace removes my sins."*

What a blessing it is to see God in Christ, and to rejoice in him.

And, now, beloved, if you are being daily fed by Jesus and are dwelling in God, the light of the sun, as to temporal pros-

perity, will do you no harm. You may be rich, but you will not trust in uncertain riches; you may be famous, but you will be as humble as if you were obscure; you may be learned, but you will sit at Jesus' feet; you may be indulged with all kinds of worldly prosperity, and yet these things will not prove a snare unto you. "Neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat."

Those who dwell in God are not now parched with inward heat. We notice people of God who are anxious and fretful, and cause a great deal of misery for people round about them by always worrying, fidgetting, and being in a state of nervous excitement. But holy souls, who abide in Christ, take everything calmly. You can remember such persons, both men and women; — whatever happened they remained unmoved, patient and cheerful. Great losses came in the course of business, but the brother did not lose his balance; sad bereavements came, but the sister did not repine. If the believer endured a sharp affliction, his chief concern was that the Lord would sanctify it to him: if people persecuted or slandered him he was not surprised, for he expected to be hated of the world when he became a follower of Jesus. If he prospered, he did not get into a heat of pride, and begin to crow over everybody else like a cock on his dunghill. In patience he possessed his soul. God's good gift of the Holy Spirit comforted and strengthened him. He could say, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise." "Neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." How much of mischief comes to the human body through its heats! The doctor looks hopeful when our blood grows cool again and the fever ceases. The best cure for the fever of the soul is to be made to dwell under the shadow of the Almighty, and to be fed by the Lord Jesus Christ; for that sacred shadow, and that health-giving food, prevent the burning sickness from coming near the chosen of the Lord. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide

under the shadow of the Almighty. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee." Safe, calm, happy, restful shalt thou be: thy soul shall dwell at ease, and with the meek thou shalt inherit the earth.

"Ah," says somebody, "you are setting us up an exceedingly high standard." I am setting up a standard to which multitudes of God's people have attained, to which I would have you all attain. If this blessed bribe of heaven below does not make you ambitious to rise to this level, what more shall I say? It is for your own profit and for God's glory that you should not rest content short of this. Rise from the dust, my brethren. Ascend into the hill of the Lord, and stand in his holy place. Abide in Christ, and feed upon Christ, and then all this shall be yours to-day and throughout life. So much for the perfection of the provision.

II. Now will you give me your heart's attention while I touch a noble string, and that is, THE DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER. "For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters." You see this is the reason for all the provision and enjoyment: the verse begins with the word "For," signifying that this is the cause of all the felicity of the blessed, that the Lamb doth feed and lead them.

Who is this that feeds them? It is the Lamb. I wish it were possible for me to communicate to you the enjoyment my own soul has had in meditating upon this blessed word "The Lamb," as it stands in this connection. Does it not teach us, first, that our comfort and life must come from our incarnate Saviour — the Lamb? The expression is very peculiar: it is a figure, and no figure; a mixed metaphor, and yet most plain and clear! It is

written, "The Lamb shall shepherd them." This is an accurate interpretation. How is that? A shepherd, and that shepherd a Lamb! Here is the truth which the words contain, — he that saves is a man like ourselves. He that provides for his people is himself one of them, — "For which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." A lamb is a member of the flock; but in this case the Lamb is the shepherd of the flock: a shepherd who is also a lamb must be the most tender shepherd conceivable, the most sympathetic and brotherly guardian that can be. When a man is shepherd to sheep he should be compassionate, but he cannot be so tender as if he actually partook of their nature. In our case our shepherd is to the full a partaker of our nature: we are men, and our shepherd is a man.

Beloved, our soul's support, our spiritual meat, lies in this, that the Son of God is a partaker of flesh and blood, and is one of ourselves. He that sits upon the throne is our kinsman, a sharer in our nature, a brother born of adversity— why, surely this heavenly truth is manna from heaven, the food of saintly souls. The Lamb is their hope, their comfort, their honour, their delight, their glory.

Does it not mean more than that? "the Lamb" surely refers to sacrifice. Only run your eye back a verse or two, and you have the key of the expression, "they that washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." He, then, that feeds his people in heaven is the sacrifice, the atonement, the expiation. In heaven they glory in the cross. Each one sings "he loved me and gave himself for me." The glorified drink the deepest draughts of delight from the fact that God was made flesh, and that in human flesh he offered perfect expiation for human guilt. Brethren, these two fountains are here as well as there: come, let us drink of them; let us prevent our thirst by the water of the well of Bethlehem, and by streams from the smitten rock.

Still, there is a third meaning which must not be overlooked. "The Lamb" must refer to the meekness of character, the lowliness and condescension of the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus Christ on earth was "led as a lamb to the slaughter." He was "meek and lowly in heart." He walked up and down among men, the friend of sinners, the lover of little children, the companion of the poor, and to-day he is not otherwise than he was on the earth. Though heaven adores him, he is still as compassionate and condescending as he was in the days of his flesh, and this is why he can feed his people so well both here and in heaven.

I beg you to dwell upon that word "Lamb" till you feed upon it with your whole souls. Jesus has joined himself to his flock: "As the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." As surely as he is God he is also man, indeed and of a truth; not in semblance, but in reality.

*"It is my sweetest comfort,
 Lord, And will for ever be,
 To muse upon the gracious truth
 Of thy humanity.
 "Oh, joy! there sitteth in our flesh,
 Upon a throne of light,
 One of a human mother born,
 In perfect Godhead bright!
 "For ever God, for ever man,
 My Jesus shall endure;
 And fix'd on him, my hope remains
 Eternally secure."*

He is also our sacrifice: "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." What rest came unto our hearts when we

first understood the meaning of that word—“Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world”! Continue to behold him, and all your feverish heats will be abated, and your hunger and thirst of spirit will be gone.

Jesus is so meek and lowly, as I have said, that you may approach to him at all times, and he will manifest himself to you. He is tender and gentle, and never makes himself strange unto his own flesh. Sitting at his feet you shall find rest unto your soul. “Neither shall the sun light on you, nor any heat.”

The character of our Lord, then, brings our spirit all that it needs; but yet this is not all: the text speaks of “the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne” as feeding them. Think of that, the Lamb in the midst of the throne. Can you put these two things together, a sacrifice and a throne? That same Saviour who opened his veins that he might cleanse us from sin now wears the imperial purple of the universe. He that stooped to be made sin for us is now supreme sovereign, King of kings and Lord of lords. Think of that and be comforted. Our Representative is glorified. Our covenant Head, our second Adam, is in the midst of the throne. God the Father hath exalted the Mediator to the place of power and honour and rule. Our Saviour hath all power in heaven and in earth. Sometimes when I think of my great King and Captain exalted to so glorious an estate, I feel that it matters nothing what becomes of me, his poor follower. The sun of persecution smites not when he is seen as God over all blessed for ever. Hunger is not hunger, and pain is not pain, for such a loved one. In blissful sympathy with the unutterable delights of Jesus, we are happy at our worst, feeling that if Christ be rich we are not poor, and if Christ be happy we are not disappointed. His victory is our victory. His glory is our glory. Feel this union with your enthroned Lord, and you will begin to be in heaven.

Yet further remember that when we read of “the Lamb

which is in the midst of the throne," it must mean that our Redeemer is the most conspicuous of persons. In the forefront of the throne is Jesus. He is seen of angels; he is beheld continually with wonder by all the servants of our God. The sovereignty of God, his royal power, his eternal majesty are at the back of Christ to sustain his cause and make his name illustrious. He must reign. Every eye must see him, every knee must bow to him, and every tongue must call him Lord, to the glory of God the Father. He shall have all enemies under his feet, and shall be extolled, and exalted, and be very high. My heart rejoices to remember this fact in this cloudy and dark day. Though our modern thinkers sneer at the gospel, and sceptics scoff at the doctrine of the Nazarene, and all manner of scorn is poured upon our holy faith, yet the Lord hath set his Son upon his holy hill, and he is there with him to secure his everlasting dominion, despite the assaults of men and devils.

In all this I see the choicest food for the flock of God. To them Jesus speaks from the throne, and uses to-day words like those which he spoke on earth. "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Out of the glory he saith, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

The "midst of the throne" seems to signify also that Jesus has become the very centre of all things. "Unto him shall the gathering of the people be." He is lifted up, and all men are drawn to him. He is the great central sun, and all other lights revolve about him. He is the heart of the eternal purpose, the hinge of history, and the climax of revelation. He reigns in the midst of heaven, even as at this day upon earth he is in the midst of two or three who are met together in his name. Our joy is like that of the just made perfect. In this delight we unite with the general assembly and church of the firstborn. Jesus on

the throne is to our hearts and songs the central person, and the centre shall never be removed, neither shall the gathering of his people be scattered.

Thus you see who it is that feeds the saints in heaven, and I desire you to feel that if you are to be fed and comforted here below, it must be by the same great Shepherd of the sheep, in the same character. There are no stores for you other than those which are in the hands of Jesus, in whom all fulness dwells; there are no comforts for you except as they are given from the throne where the Lamb is reigning. Turn ye away, my brethren, turn ye away from all the frothy novelties of modern thought, and the vain inventions of man, and behold the crown of your adorable Lord, the Lamb of God's Passover, the Lamb who shall overcome all the powers of evil and stand in the midst of the throne. Dwell on the literal, historical incarnation of the Son of God; believe in his literal death, in his actual substitution, his complete and perfect atonement; dwell on his rising from the dead, and his ascent to the right hand of God, and never doubt it that he is now the supreme object of heaven's adoration, the Lord of all things that are or shall be, sure and certain to be in the latter days exalted above all principalities and powers, and every name that is named. If we can but live on these truths, and delight ourselves in them, we shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on us, nor any heat, but even here we shall find living fountains of water, and tears shall be wiped from our eyes.

III. I finish by giving a hint or two only upon the third point; that is to say, THE MANNER OF THIS PROVIDING. We have considered the provision in its perfection, and the Provider in his glorious character, now let us see how this provision is given to the saints, for in the same manner is it brought to us.

In two ways the saints in heaven enjoy it, — the Lamb that

is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them. Go over this, and think first of the feeding of them. The Greek word is "shall shepherdize them." In heaven Jesus is a shepherd ruling over all his flock with a happy, genial, sympathetic sovereignty, to which they yield prompt and glad obedience. There the Lord Jesus cares for his people immediately and personally. He himself bestows upon them all that they require. Here he has under-shepherds, and he hands out the food by our poor instrumentality; and, alas, sometimes we are found incapable, or forgetful, and the flock is not fed: but it is never so in heaven, for the Lamb himself maintains the pastorate, and acts the shepherd in a manner which none of us can emulate. What saith the prophet Micah? "And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God; and they shall abide: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth."

All else of care and feeding that saints can require in glory is in Christ. I know not what it may be, but this I know, that while they worship him he cares for them. He is among them as the Chief Shepherd, at whose appearing the under-shepherds shall appear with him in glory.

Up yonder Jesus still communes with them very closely, else were it not written, "The Lamb shall feed them." I remind you again of what we have said: he feeds them, therefore he is their Shepherd; yet still it is the Lamb that feeds them, therefore he is one with them; as if he fed with them, as if their food was his food, and his food their food, and they were one with him in all respects. But what must fellowship with Christ be in heaven! I do protest I have sometimes had, and many of you have had, such communion with Jesus here that, if I could but have continued to enjoy it, it would not have concerned me the turning of a penny whether I were here or among the angels, for it was bliss enough for me to be with Jesus. But, oh! when

we shall have enlarged our capacities, when our understanding shall have been cleared, and our affections purified, and all our manhood shall be made innocent and Christlike, what must it be then to behold his glory, to commune with himself, to lean our head upon his bosom, to bask in his love, and to feel our hearts on fire with love in return! Oh to be with him for ever, to see no intervening cloud, to feel no wandering wish, no thought of future declension, no possibility of grieving him by sin! What must it be to be for ever one with him in his glory! That is bliss above conception. He shepherdizes them, he himself does it, and therefore they are supremely blessed. Now do you not think we can enjoy some of this to-day? Do you question it? What does the tenth of John mean, if Jesus is not the good Shepherd of his sheep at this day? Bead it through when you get home. What does the twenty-third Psalm mean? Is that a psalm for another world, or for this? Does it not say, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters"? Why, one would think from the look of your doubtful face that it ran thus— "The Lord has forgotten to be my shepherd. He has given me over to the wolf. He has driven me into a wilderness, and left me among the dark mountains. I perish in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is." It is not so; we must not think it so, for even here our great Lord is our Shepherd, and he careth for each one of the flock.

Then it is added, "He shall lead" That is another work of the Shepherd, to lead his flock, — "He leads them to living fountains of waters." You may read it, "he shall guide them to fountains of waters of life"; it is but a variation of the same thought. Now, even in heaven the holy ones need guiding, and Jesus leads the way. While he is guiding, he points out to his people the secret founts and fresh springs which as yet they have not tasted. As eternity goes on, I have no doubt that the

Saviour will be indicating fresh delights to his redeemed. "Come hither," saith he to his flock, "here are yet more flowing streams." He will lead them on and on, by the century, aye, by the chiliad, from glory unto glory, onward and upward in growing knowledge and enjoyment. Continually will he conduct his flock to deeper mysteries and higher glories. Never will the inexhaustible God who has given himself to be the portion of his people ever be fully known, so that there will eternally be sources of freshness and new delight, and the Shepherd will continue to lead his flock to these living fountains of water. He will guide them,

*"'From glory unto glory' that ever lies before,
Still widening, adoring, rejoicing more and
more,
Still following where he leadeth, from shining
field to field,
Himself our goal of glory, Revealer and
Revealed!"*

He will also cause them to drink of the river of his pleasures, so that they shall be full of bliss. Can we not grasp a little of this to-day? If we will but follow Christ we may drink of the water which he freely gives to all who believe in him, even as he gave to the woman of Samaria. "I cannot see any joy," cries one. No; but Jesus will lead you to it. "Oh, but I read my Bible this morning, and I did not get anything from it." That may be; but if Jesus had been there and led you to the fountain, you would have been refreshed. How the texts open up when Jesus touches them! You are like Hagar; you have laid your child down among the shrubs to die; you are perishing of thirst, and yet if you would but listen you might hear the splash of the falling waters just behind you. You only need the Lord to speak

and open your eyes and you will see rich supplies, for the living fountain is near at hand. Go you to the Saviour to-day, and say, "Lord, lead me to living fountains of water. I drank years ago, and I have been drinking all along, but Lord I want deeper draughts. I desire to know more and love more." Jesus will lead you. He will do it now, and when he does so you will realise to the full how like this earth may be to heaven above. Let us commit ourselves like sheep to our great Shepherd. Come, ye wanderers, return to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls. You that have been in him these many years and fed in his pastures, come near to him and follow him yet more closely, and your eyes shall be opened to see new rivers of delight where all seemed dry. You shall find in the valley of Baca a well, and drinking of it you shall go from strength to strength, till every one of you in Zion appeareth before God. How long will it be, O ever-blessed One, till we behold thee?

Even now the day breaketh!

THIRTY-SEVEN
HEAVEN ABOVE AND HEAVEN BELOW

SERMON GIVEN ON FEBRUARY 2, 1890

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 7:16,17

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 36

“They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters.”
— Revelation 7:16-17.

“They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them.”

ISAIAH 49:10.

JORDAN is a very narrow stream. It made a sort of boundary for Canaan; but it hardly sufficed to divide it from the rest of the world, since a part of the possessions of Israel was on the eastern side of it. Those who saw the Red Sea divided, and all Israel marching through its depths, must have thought it a small thing for the Jordan to be dried up, and for the people to pass through it to Canaan. The greatest barrier between believers and heaven has been safely passed. In the day when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, we passed through our Red Sea, and the Egyptians of our sins were drowned. Great was the marvel of mercy! To enter fully into our eternal inheritance, we have only to cross the narrow stream of death; and scarcely that, for the kingdom of heaven lieth on this side of the liver as well as on the other.

I start by reminding you of this, because we are very apt to imagine that we must endure a kind of purgatory while we are on earth, and then, if we are believers, we may break loose into heaven after we have shuffled off this mortal coil. But it is not so. Heaven must be in us before we can be in heaven; and while we are yet in the wilderness, we may spy out the land, and may eat of the clusters of Eshcol. There is no such gulf between earth and heaven as gloomy thoughts suggest. Our dreams should not be of an abyss, but of a ladder whose foot is on the earth, but whose top is in glory. There would not be one hundredth part so much difference between earth and heaven if we did not live so far below our privileges. We live on the ground, when we might rise as on the wings of eagles. We are all too conscious of this body. Oh, that we were oftener where Paul was when he said, "Whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth"! If not caught up into Paradise, yet may our daily life be as the garden of the Lord.

Listen a while, ye children of God; for I speak to you, and not to others. To unbelievers, what can I say? They know

nothing of spiritual things, and will not believe them, though a man should show them unto them. They are spiritually blind and dead: the Lord quicken and enlighten them! But to you that are begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, I speak with joy. Think of what you are by grace, and remember that what you will be in glory is already outlined and foreshadowed in your life in Christ. Being born from above, you are the same men that will be in heaven. You have within you the divine life— the same life which is to enjoy eternal immortality. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life”: it is your possession now. As the quickened ones of the Holy Spirit, the life which is to last on for ever has begun in you.

At this moment you are already, in many respects, the same as you ever will be. I might almost repeat this passage in the Revelation concerning some of you at this very hour:— “What are these? and whence came they? These are they that came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” I might even go on to say, “Therefore are they before the throne of God”— for you abide in close communion with the King— “and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.” I am straining no point when I thus speak of the sanctified.

Beloved, you are now “elect according to the foreknowledge of God,” and you are “the called according to his purpose.” Already you are as much forgiven as you will be when you stand without fault before the throne of God. The Lord Jesus has washed you whiter than snow, and none can lay aught to your charge. You are as completely justified by the righteousness of Christ as you ever can be; you are covered with his righteousness, and heaven itself cannot provide a robe more spotless. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God.” “He hath

made us accepted in the Beloved." To-day we have the spirit of adoption, and enjoy access to the throne of the heavenly grace; yea, and to-day by faith we are raised up in Christ, and made to sit in the heavenlies in him. We are now united to Christ, now indwelt by the Holy Ghost: are not these great things, and heavenly things? The Lord hath brought us out of darkness into his marvellous light. Although we may, from one point of view, lament the dimness of the day, yet, as compared with our former darkness, the light is marvellous; and, best of all, it is the same light which is to brighten from dawn into mid-day. What is grace but the morning twilight of glory?

Look ye, beloved: the inheritance that is to be yours to-morrow, is, in very truth, yours to-day; for in Christ Jesus you have received the inheritance, and you have the earnest of it in the present possession of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in you. It has been well said, that all the streets of the New Jerusalem begin here. See, here is the High Street of Peace, which leads to the central palace of God; and now we set our foot on it. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." The heavenly street of Victory, where are the palms and the harps, surely we are at the lower end of it here; for "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Everything that is to be ours in the home country is, in measure, ours at this moment. As sleeps the oak within the acorn, so slumbereth heaven within the first cry of "Abba, Father!" Ay, and the hallelujahs of eternity lie hidden within the groans of penitence. "God be merciful to me a sinner" has in its bowels the endless "We praise thee, O Lord." O saints, little do you know how much you have in what you have!

If I could bring believers consciously nearer to the state of glory by their more complete enjoyment of the privileges of the state of grace, I should be exceeding glad. Beloved, you will never have a better God: and "this God is our God for ever and

ever." Delight yourselves in him this day. The richest saint in glory has no greater possession than his God: and even I also can say, in the words of the psalm,

"Yea, mine own God is he."

Despite your tribulation, take full delight in God your exceeding joy this morning, and be happy in him. They in heaven are shepherded by the Lamb of God, and so are you: he still carrieth the lambs in his bosom, and doth gently lead those that are with young. Even here he makes us to lie down in green pastures: what would we have more? With such a God, and such a Saviour, all you can want is that indwelling Spirit, who shall help you to realize your God, and to rejoice in your Saviour; and you have this also; for the Spirit of God dwelleth with you and is in you: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God?" God the Holy Ghost is not far away, neither have we to entreat his influence, as though it were rays from a far-off star; for he abides in his people evermore. I will not say that heavenly perfection is not far superior to the highest state that we ever reach on earth; but the difference lies more in our own failure than in the nature of things. Grace, if realized to its full, would brighten off into glory. When the Holy Spirit fully possesses our being, and we yield ourselves to his power, our weakness is strength, and our infirmity is to be gloried in. Then is it true, that on earth God is with us, and there is but a step between us and heaven, where we are with God.

Thus I have conducted you to my two texts, which I have put together as an illustration of what I would teach. In the New Testament text we have the heavenly state above; and in the Old Testament text we have the state of the Lord's flock while on the way to their eternal rest. Very singular, to my mind, is the sameness of the description of the flock in the fold,

and the flock feeding in the ways. The verses are almost word for word the same. When John would describe the white-robed host, he can say no more of them than Isaiah said of the pilgrim band, led by the God of mercy.

I. First, LET US CONSIDER THE HEAVENLY STATE ABOVE. The beloved John tells us what he heard and saw.

The first part of the description assures us of the supply of every need. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore." In heaven no need is unsatisfied, and no desire ungratified. They can have no want as to their bodies, for they are as the angels of God. Children of poverty, your straitness of bread will soon be ended, and your care shall end in plenty. The worst hunger is that of the heart; and this will be unknown above. There is a ravenous hunger, fierce as a wolf, which possesses some men: all the world cannot satisfy their greed. A thousand worlds would be scarce a mouthful for their lust. Now, in heaven there are no sinful and selfish desires. The ravening of covetousness or of ambition enters not the sacred gate. In glory there are no desires which should not be, and those desires which should be are all so tempered or so fulfilled that they can never become the cause of sorrow or pain; for, "they shall hunger no more." Even the saints need love, fellowship, rest: they have all these in union to God, in the communion of saints, and in the rest of Jesus. The unrenewed man is always thirsting; but Christ can stay this even now, for he saith, "He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." Be you sure, then, that from the golden cup of glory we shall drink that which will quench all thirst for ever. There is not, in all the golden streets of heaven, a single person who is desiring what he may not have, or wanting what he cannot obtain, or even wishing for that which he has not to his hand. O happy state! Their mouth is

satisfied with good things; they are filled with all the fulness of God.

And as there is in heaven a supply for every need, so is there the removal of every ill. Thus saith the Spirit, "Neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." We are such poor creatures that excess of good soon becomes evil to us. I love the sun: if you had ever seen it shining in the clear blue heavens, you would not wonder that I speak with emphasis. Life, joy, and health stream from it in lands where it is enough of pleasure to bask in its beams. But too much of the sun overpowers us; his warmth makes men faint, his stroke destroys them. Too great a blessing may prove too heavy a cargo for the ship of life. Hence we need guarding from dangers which, at the first sight, look as if they were not perilous. In the beatific state, if these bodies of flesh and blood were still our dwelling-place, we could not live under the celestial conditions. Even here, too much of spiritual joy may prostrate a man, and cast him into a swoon. I would like to die of the disease; but still, a sickness cometh upon one to whom heavenly things are revealed in great measure, and enjoyed with special vividness. One of the saints cried out in an agony of delight, "Hold, Lord, hold! Remember I am but an earthen vessel, and can contain no more!" The Lord has to limit his revelations, because we cannot bear them now. I have heard of one who looked upon the sun imprudently, and was blinded by the light. The very sunlight of divine revelation, favour, and fellowship could readily prove too much for our feeble vision, heart, and brain. Therefore, in the glorious state flesh and blood shall be removed, and the raised body shall be strengthened to endure that fierce light which beats about the throne of Deity. As for us, as we now are, we might well cry, "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire?" But when the redemption of the body has come about, and the soul has been strengthened with all might,

we shall be able to be at home with our God, who is a consuming fire. "Neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." May God grant us to enjoy the anticipation of that happy period when we shall behold his face, when his secret shall be with us, and we shall know even as we are known! Oh, for that day when we shall enter into the Holiest, and shall stand before the presence of his glory; and yet, so far from being afraid, shall be filled with exceeding joy!

But, further, the description of the heavenly life has this conspicuous feature— the leading of the Lamb. "The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them." It is heaven to be personally shepherded by him who is the Great Sacrifice. In this present state we have earthly shepherds; and when God graciously feeds us by men after his own heart, whom he himself instructs, we prize them much. Those whom the Lord ordains to feed his flock we love, and their faith we follow, for the Lord makes them of great service to us; but still, they are only underlings, and we do not forget their imperfections, and their dependence upon their Lord. But in the glory-land "that Great Shepherd of the sheep" will himself personally minister to us. Those dear lips that are as lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh, shall speak directly to each one of our hearts. We shall hear his voice, we shall behold his face, we shall be fed by his hand, we shall follow at his heel. How gloriously will he "stand and feed"! How restfully shall we lie down in green pastures!

He shall feed us in his dearest character. As the Lamb he revealed his greatest love, and as the Lamb will he lead and feed us for ever. The Revised Version wisely renders the passage, "The Lamb in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd." We are never fed so sweetly by our Lord himself as when he reveals to us most clearly his character as the sacrifice for sin. The atoning sacrifice is the centre of the sun of infinite

love, the light of light. There is no truth like it for the revelation of God. Christ in his wounds and bloody sweat is Christ indeed. "He his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." With this truth before us, his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed. In heaven we shall know him far better than we do now as the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world, the Lamb of God's Passover, "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." That deep peace, that eternally unbroken rest which we shall derive from a sight of the Great Sacrifice, will be a chief ingredient in the bliss of heaven. "The Lamb shall feed them."

But though we shall see our Lord as a Lamb, it will not be in a state of humiliation, but in a condition of power and honour. "The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them." Heaven will largely consist of expanded views of King Jesus, and nearer beholdings of the glory which follows upon his sacrificial grief. Ah, brethren, how little do we know his glory! We scarce know who he is that has befriended us. We hold the doctrine of his Deity tenaciously; but in heaven we shall perceive his Godhead in its truth so far as the finite can apprehend the infinite. We have known his friendship to us, but when we shall behold the King in his beauty in his own halls, and our eyes shall look into his royal countenance, and his face, which outshineth the sun, shall beam ineffable affection upon each one of us, then shall we find our heaven in his glory. We ask no thrones; his throne is ours. The enthroned Lamb himself is all the heaven we desire.

Then the last point of the description is full of meaning. The drinking at the fountain is the secret of the ineffable bliss. "The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and lead them unto living fountains of waters." We are compelled to thirst at times, like the poor flock of slaughter which we see driven through our London streets; and, alas! we

stop at the very puddles by the way, and would refresh ourselves at them, if we could. This will never happen to us when we reach the land where flows the river of the water of life. There the sheep drink of no stagnant waters, or bitter wells, but they are satisfied from living fountains of waters. Comfort is measurably to be found in the streams of providential mercies, and therefore they are to be received with gratitude; but yet common blessings are unfilling things to souls quickened by grace. Corn can fill the barn, but not the heart. Of the wells of earth we may say, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again"; but when we go beyond temporal supplies, and live upon God himself, then the soul receives a draught of far truer and more enduring refreshment; even as our Lord Jesus said to the woman at the well, "He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." In heaven the happy ones live not on bread, which is the staff of life, but on God, who is life itself. The second cause is passed over, and the first cause alone is seen.

In the home country souls have no need of the means of grace, for they have reached the God of grace. The means of grace are like conduit-pipes, which bring down the living water to us: but we have found them fail us; and at times we have used them in so faulty a way that the water has lost its freshness, or has even been made to taste of the pipe through which it flowed. Fruit is best when gathered fresh from the garden: the fingering of the market destroys the bloom. We have too much of this in our ministries. Brethren, we shall soon drink living water at the well-head, and gather the golden fruit from him who is "as the apple tree among the trees of the wood." We shall have no need of baptisms and breakings of bread, nor of churches and pastors. We shall not need the golden chalices or

the earthen vessels which now serve our turn so well, but we shall come to the river's source, and drink our full. "He shall lead them unto living fountains of water."

At times, alas! we know what it is to come to the pits and find no water; and then we try to live on happy memories, We sing, and sigh; or sigh, and sing—

*"What peaceful hours I once enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void
The world can never fill."*

A cake made of memories will do for a bite now and then, but it makes poor daily bread. We want the present enjoyment of God. We need still to go to the fountain for new supplies; for water which standeth long in the pitcher loses its cool and refreshing excellence. Happy is the man that is not living upon the memories of what he used to enjoy, but is even now in the banqueting-house! The present and perpetual renewal of first love and first delight in God is heaven.

Heaven is to know the substance and the secret of the divine life— not to hold a cup, but to drink of the living water. The doctrine is precious, but it is far better to know the thing about which the doctrine speaks. The doctrine is the salver of silver,, but the blessing itself is the apple of gold. Blessed are they that are always fed on the substance of the truth, the verity of verities, the essence of essential things.

"He shall lead them unto fountains." There the eternal source is unveiled: they not only receive the mercy, but they see how it comes, and whence it flows: they not only drink, but they drink with their eye upon the glorious Well-head. Did you ever see a boy on a hot day lie down, when he has been thirsty, and put his mouth down to the top of the water at the brim of

the well? How he draws up the cool refreshment! Drink away, poor child! He has no fear that he will drink the well dry, nor have we. How pleasant it is to take from the inexhaustible! That which we drink is all the sweeter, because of the measureless remainder. Enough is not enough: but when we have God for our all in all, then are we content. When I am near to God, and dwell in the overflowing of his love, I feel like the cattle on a burning summer's day when they take to the brook which ripples around them up to their knees, and there they stand, filled, cooled, and sweetly refreshed. O my God, in thee I feel that I have not only all that I can contain, but all that containeth me. In thee I live and move with perfect content. Such is heaven! We shall have bliss within and bliss around us; we ourselves drinking at the source, and dwelling by the well for ever. The fact is, that heaven is God fully enjoyed. The evil that God hates will be wholly cast out; the capacity which God gives will be enlarged and prepared for full fruition, and our whole being will be taken up with God, the ever-blessed, from whom we came, and to whom it will be heaven to return. Who knoweth God knoweth heaven. The source of all things is our fountain of living waters.

Thus I could occupy all the morning with my first head; but I must not tarry, or I shall miss my aim, which is to show you that, even here, we may outline glory and in the wilderness we may have the pattern of things in the heavens. This you will see by carefully referring to the second text.

II. LET US CONSIDER THE HEAVENLY STATE BELOW. I think I have heard you saying, "Ah! this is all about heaven; but we have not yet come to it. We are still wrestling here below." Well, well; if we cannot go to heaven at once, heaven can come to us. The words which I will now read refer to the days of earth, the times when the sheep feed in the ways, and come from the north and from the south at the call of the

shepherd. "They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them."

Look at the former passage and at this. The whole description is the same. When I noticed this parallel, I stood amazed. John, thou art a great artist; I entreat thee, paint me a picture of heaven! Isaiah, thou also hast a great soul; draw me a picture of the life of the saintly ones on earth when their Lord is with them! I have both pictures. They are masterpieces. I look at them, and they are so much alike, that I wonder if there be not some mistake. Surely they are depicting the same thing. The forms, the lights and shades, the touches and the tones are not only alike, but identical. Amazed, I cry, "Which is heaven, and which is the heavenly life on earth?" The artists know their own work, and by their instruction I will be led. Isaiah painted our Lord's sheep in his presence on the way to heaven, and John drew the same flock in the glory with the Lamb; and the fact that the pictures are so much alike is full of suggestive teaching. Here are the same ideas in the same words. Brethren, may you and I as fully believe and enjoy the second passage, as we hope to realize and enjoy the first Scripture when we get home to heaven.

First, here is a promise that every want shall be supplied. "They shall not hunger nor thirst." If we are the Lord's people and are trusting in him, this shall be true in every possible sense. Literally, "your bread shall be given you, your water shall be sure." You shall have no anxious thought concerning what you shall eat, and what you shall drink. But, mark you, if you should know the trials of poverty, and should be greatly tried, and brought very low in temporal things, yet the Lord's presence and sensible consolations shall so sustain you that spiritually and inwardly you shall know neither hunger nor thirst. Many saints have found riches in poverty, ease in labour, rest in

pain, and delight in affliction. Our Lord can so adapt our minds to our circumstances, that the bitter is sweet, and the burden is light. Paul speaks of the saints "as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." Note well that the sorrow has an "as" connected with it; but the rejoicing is a fact. "They shall not hunger nor thirst." If you live in God, you shall have no ungratified desire. "Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." There may be many things that you would like to have, and you may never have them; but then you will prefer to be without them, saying, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." If Christ be with you, you will be so happy in him that wanton, wandering wishes will be like the birds which may fly over your head, but dare not make their nests in your hair. You will be without a peevish craving, or a pining ambition, or a carking care. "Oh," says a believer, "I wish I could reach that state." You may reach it: you are on the way to it. Only love Christ more, and be more like him, and you shall be satisfied with favour, and sing, "All my springs are in thee"; "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him."

I do not mean that the saints find a full content in this world's goods, but that they find such content in God, that with them or without them they live in wealth. A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of that which he possesseth; and many a man who has had next to nothing that could be seen with eyes or handled with hands, has been a very millionaire for true wealth in possessing the kingdom of the Most High. The Lord has brought some of us into that state in which we have all things in him; and it is true to us, "They shall not hunger nor thirst."

Then, next, there is such a thing as having every evil removed from you while yet in this wilderness. "Neither shall the heat nor sun smite them." Suppose God favours you with

prosperity; if you live near to God you will not be rendered proud or worldly-minded by your prosperity. Suppose you should become popular because of your usefulness; you will not be puffed up if Christ Jesus is your continual leader and shepherd. If you live near to him, you will be lowly. If your days are spent in sunlight, and you go from joy to joy, yet still no sunstroke shall smite you. If still you dwell in God, and your heart is full of Christ, and you are led as a sheep by him, no measure of heat shall overpower you. It is a mistake to think that our safety or our danger is according to our circumstances; our safety or our danger is according to our nearness to God, or our distance from him. A man who is near to God can stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and the devil may tempt him to throw himself down, and yet he will be firm as the temple itself. A man that is without God may be in the safest part of the road, and traverse a level way, and yet he will stumble. It is not the road, but the Lord that keepeth the pilgrim's foot. O heir of heaven, commit thou thy way unto God, and make him thine all in all, and rise above the creature into the Creator, and then shalt thou hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the heat nor the sun smite thee.

Further, it is said, that on earth we may enjoy the leading of the Lord. See how it is put: "For he that hath mercy on them shall lead them." Here we have not quite the same words as in the Revelation, for there we read, "The Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall lead them." Yet the sense is but another shade of the same meaning. Oh, but that is a sweet, sweet name: is it not? "He that hath mercy on them." He has saved them, and so has had mercy on them. Yes, that is very precious, but the word is sweeter still— "He that hath mercy on them," he that is always having mercy on them, he that follows them with mercy all the days of their lives, he that continually pardons, upholds, supplies, strengthens, and thus daily loadeth

them with benefits: "He that hath mercy on them shall lead them."

Do you know, beloved friends, what it is to be led of the Lord? Many are led by their own tastes and fancies. They will go wrong. Others are led by their own judgments. But these are not infallible, and they may go wrong. More are led by other people; these may go right, but it is far from likely that they will. He that is led of God, he is the happy man, he shall not err. He shall be conducted providentially in a right way to the city of habitations. Commit your way unto the Lord: trust also in him, and he will bring it to pass. It may be a rough way, but it must be a right way if we follow the track of the Lord's feet. The true believer shall be led by the Spirit of God in sacred matters: "He will guide you into all truth." He that hath mercy on us in other things will have mercy on us by teaching us to profit. We shall each one sing, "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." We shall be led into duty and through struggles; we shall be led to happy attainments and gracious enjoyments; we shall go from strength to strength.

In the case of the gracious soul, earth becomes like heaven, because he walks with God. He that hath mercy on him visits him, communes with him, and manifests himself to him. A shepherd goeth before his flock, and the true sheep follow him. Blessed are they who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. They have a love to their Lord, and therefore they only want to know which way he would have them go, and they feel drawn along it by the cords of love and the bands of a man. If they can get a glance from their Lord's eye it suffices them: as it is written, "I will guide thee with mine eye." Every day they stand anxiously attentive to do the King's commandment, be it what it may. They yield themselves and their members to him to be instruments of righteousness, vessels fit for the Master's use. Beloved, this is heaven below. If you have ever tried it, you

know it is so. If you have never fully tried it, try it now, and you will find a new joy in it. Jesus says to you, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

I do not know anything more delightful than to be such a fool, as the world will call you, as to yield your intellect to the teaching of the Lord; and to be so weak that you cannot judge but accept his will; and so incapable that even to will and to do must be wrought in you of the Lord. Oh, to be so unselfed as to take anything from Christ far more gladly than you would choose of your own accord! If your Lord puts his hand into the bitter box, you will think the potion sweet; and if he scourge, you will thank him for being so kind as to think of you at all. When you get to that point, that you are as a sheep to whom God himself is the Shepherd, it is well with you. Then you will realize, even in the pastures of the wilderness, how the rain from heaven drops upon the inheritance of the Lord, and refreshes it when it is weary. "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." God give you to know it, dear friends! I can speak experimentally of it: it is not only the antepast of heaven, but a part of the banquet itself.

But now the last touch is the drinking at the spring-head. We were not surprised to find, in our description of heaven, that the Lamb led them to the fountains of waters; but we are delighted to find that, here below, "even by the springs of water shall he guide them." Beloved, covet earnestly this drinking at the springs. It is not all who profess to be Christians who will know what I am talking about this morning; they will think I have got into the way of the mystics, and am dreaming of things unpractical. I will not argue with them; let me speak to those who understand me.

Beloved in the Lord, you can even now live upon God himself, and there is no living comparable to it. You can get

beyond all the cisterns, and come to the river of the water of life, even as they do in heaven. To live by second causes is a very secondary life: to live on the First Cause is the first of living. I exhort you to do this with regard to the inspired Word. This is a day of man's opinions, views, judgments, criticisms. Leave them all, good, bad, and indifferent, and come to this Book, which is the pure fount of inspiration undefiled. When you study the Word of God, live upon it as his Word. I am not going to defend it; it needs no defence. I am not going to argue about its inspiration; if you know the Lord aright, his Word is inspired to you, if to no one else. You know not only that it was inspired when it was written, but that it is inspired still; and, moreover, its inspiration affects you in a way in which no other writings can ever touch you. It breathes upon you; it breathes life into you, and makes you to speak words for God, which prove to be words from God to other souls. Oh, it is wonderful, if you read the word of God in a little company, morning by morning— simply read it and pray over it, what an effect it may have upon all who listen! I speak what I do know. If you read the inspired words themselves, and look up to him who spoke them, their spiritual effect will be the witness of their inspiration. This is a miracle-working Book: it may be opposed, but never conquered; it may be buried under unbelief, but it must rise again. Blessed are they to whom the Word is meat and drink. They quit the cistern of man for the fountain of God; and they do well. "By the springs of water shall he guide them."

Yet I would exhort you not even to tarry at the letter of God's word, but believingly and humbly advance to drink from the Holy Ghost himself. He will not teach you anything which is not in the Bible, but he will take of the things of Christ, and will show them unto you. A truth may be like a jewel in the Word of God, and yet we may not see its brilliance until the Holy Spirit holds it up in the light and bids us mark its lustre.

The Spirit of God brings up the pearl from the deeps of revelation, and sets it where its radiance is perceived by the believing eye. We are such poor scholars that we learn little from the Book till "the Interpreter, one- of a thousand," opens our heart to the Word, and opens the Word to our heart. The Holy Ghost who revealed truth in the Book, must also personally reveal it to the individual. If ever you get a hold of truth in that way, you will never give it up. A man who has learned truth from one minister, may unlearn it from another minister; but he that has been taught it of the Holy Ghost, has a treasure which no man taketh from him.

Beloved, we would exhort you to drink of the springs of living water while you are here. Be often going back to fundamental doctrines. Especially get back to the consideration of covenant engagements. Whence come all the deeds of mercy from God our Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ? Come they not from eternal purposes, and from that covenant, "ordered in all things, and sure," made or ever the earth was, between the Father and the ever-blessed Son? Get you often to the well of the covenant. I know of nothing that can make you so happy as to know in your very soul how the Father pledged himself by oath to the Son, and the Son pledged himself to the eternal Father concerning the great mystery of our redemption. Eternal love and covenant faithfulness: these are ancient wells. Do not hesitate to drink deep at the fountain of electing love. The Lord himself chose you, having loved you with an everlasting love. Everything comes to the saints "according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." The Philistines have stopped this well full many a time, but they cannot prevent its waters bubbling up from among the stones which they have cast into it. There it stands. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." Get you back to the love that had no cause but the

First Cause, to the love that knows no change, to the love that knows no limit, no hesitancy, no diminution, the love that stands, like the Godhead itself, eternal and immovable. Drink from eternal springs; and if you do so, your life will be more and more “as the days of heaven upon the earth.” God grant us to get away from the deceitful brooks to “the deep which lieth under,” and with joy may we draw water.

Christ’s presence, and fountain drinking— give me these two things, and I ask no more. The Lamb to feed me, and the fountain to supply me; these are enough. Lord, whom have I in heaven but thee? Come poverty, come sickness, come shame, come casting out by brethren; yea, come death itself, nothing can I want, and nothing can harm me if the Lamb be my Shepherd and the Lord my fountain.

Before another Sunday some of us may be in heaven. Before this month has finished, some of us may know infinitely more about the eternal world than the whole assembly of divines could tell us. Others of us may have to linger here a while. Yet are we not in banishment. Here we dwell with the King for his work. We will endeavour to keep close to our Master, and if we may serve him and see his face, we will not grudge the glorified their fuller joys.

You that know nothing about these things, God grant you spiritual sense to know that you do not know, and then give you further grace to pray to him, “Lord, lead me to the living fountains.” There is an inner life, there is a heavenly secret, there is a surpassing joy; some of us know it, we wish that you, also, had it. Cry for it. Jesus can give it you at once. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt live for ever. The now birth goes with faith in Christ. May he give it you this morning, and may you begin to be heavenly here, that you may be fit for heaven hereafter. The Lord bless you, dear friends, for Jesus’ sake!

Amen.

THIRTY-EIGHT
NO TEARS IN HEAVEN

AUGUST 6, 1865

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 7:17

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 11

“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”

REVELATION 7:17.

IT is an ill thing to be always mourning, sighing, and complaining concerning the present. However dark it may be, we may surely recal some fond remembrances of the past. There were days of brightness, there were seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. Be not slow to confess, O believing soul, that the Lord has been thy help! and though now thy burden be very heavy, thou wilt find an addition to thy strength in the thought of seasons long since past, when the Lord lightened thy load, and made thy heart to leap for joy. Yet

more delightful will it be to expect the future. The night is dark, but the morning cometh. Over the hills of darkness the day breaketh. It may be that the road is rough, but its end is almost in view. Thou hast been clambering up the steep heights of Pisgah, and from the brow thereof thou mayest view thy glorious heritage. True the tomb is before thee, but thy Lord has snatched the sting from death, and the victory from the grave. Do not, O burdened spirit, confine thyself to the narrow miseries of the present hour, but let thine eye gaze with fondness upon the enjoyment of the past, and view with equal ardour the infinite blessings of old eternity, when thou wast not, but when God set thee apart for himself, and wrote thy name in his book of life; and let thy glance flash forward to the future eternity, the mercies which shall be thine even here on earth, and the glories which are stored up for thee beyond the skies. I shall be well rewarded this morning if I shall minister comfort to one heavy spirit by leading it to remember the glory which is yet to be revealed.

Coming to our text, we shall observe, in the first place, that as God is to wipe away tears from the faces of the glorified, we may well infer that their eyes will be filled with tears till then; and in the second place, it is worthy of reflection that as God never changes, even now he is engaged in drying tears from his children's eyes; and then, coming right into the heart of the text, we shall dwell upon the great truth, that in heaven Divine Love removes all tears from the glorified ; and so we shall close, by making some inquiry as to whether or not we belong to that happy company.

I. Our first subject of meditation is the inference that TEARS ARE TO FILL THE EYES OF BELIEVERS UNTIL THEY ENTER THE PROMISED REST.

There would be no need to wipe them away if there were none remaining. They come to the very gates of heaven weeping, and accompanied by their two comrades, sorrow and sighing; the tears are dried, and sorrow and sighing flee away. The weeping willow grows not by the river of the water of life, but it is plentiful enough below; nor shall we lose it till we change it for the palm-branch of victory. Sorrow's dewdrop will never cease to fall until it is transformed into the pearl of everlasting bliss.

*"The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the place where sorrow is unknown."*

Religion brings deliverance from the curse, but not exemption from trial.

The ancients were accustomed to use bottles in which to catch the tears of mourners. Methinks I see three bottles filled with the tears of believers. The first is a common bottle, the ordinary lachrymatory containing griefs incidental to all men, for believers suffer even as the rest of the race. Physical pain by no means spares the servants of God. Their nerves, and blood-vessels, and limbs, and inward organs, are as susceptible of disease as those of unregenerate men. Some of the choicest saints have lain longest on beds of sickness, and those who are dearest to the heart of God have felt the heaviest blows of the chastening rod. There are pains which, despite the efforts of patience, compel the tears to wet the cheeks. The human frame is capable of a fearful degree of agony, and few there be who have not at some time or other watered their couch with tears because of the acuteness of their pains. Coupled with this,

there are the losses and crosses of daily life. What Christian among you trades without occasional difficulties and serious losses? Have any of you a lot so easy that you have nothing to deplore? Are there no crosses at home? Are there no troubles abroad? Can you travel from the first of January to the last of December without feeling the weariness of the way? Have you no blighted field, no bad debt, no slandered name, no harsh word, no sick child, no suffering wife to bring before the Lord in weeping prayer? You must be an inhabitant of another planet if you have had no griefs, for man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards. No ship can navigate the Atlantic of earth without meeting with storms, it is only upon the Pacific of heaven that all is calm for evermore. Believers must through much tribulation, inherit the kingdom of heaven. "Trials must and will befall." Death contributes to our woes; the heirs of immortality are often summoned to gather around the tomb. Who hath not lost a friend? If Jesus wept, expect not that we shall be without the tears of bereavement; the well-beloved Lazarus died, and so will our choicest friends. Parents will go before us, infants will be snatched from us, brothers and sisters will fall before the scythe of death, Impartial foe of all, thou sparest neither virtue nor vice, holiness nor sin; with equal foot thou treadest on the cherished loves of all! The Christian knows also disappointments as bitter and as keen as other men. Judas betrays Christ, Ahithophel is a traitor to David. We have had our Ahithophels, and we may yet meet with our Judas. We have trusted in friends, and we have found their friendships fail. We have leaned upon what seemed a staff, and it has pierced us like a spear. You cannot, dear friends, traverse the wilderness of this world without discovering that thorns and thistles grow plenteously in it, and that, step as you may, your feet must sometimes feel their power to wound. The sea of life is salt to all men. Clouds hover over every landscape. We may

forget to laugh, but we shall always know how to weep. As the saturated fleece must drip, so must the human race, cursed by the fall, weep out its frequent griefs.

I see before me a second bottle. It is black and foul, for it contains tears distilled by the force of the fires of sin. This bottle holds more than the first, and is far more regularly filled. Sin is more frequently the mother of sorrow than all the other ills of life put together. Dear brothers and sisters, I am convinced that we endure more sorrow from our sins than from God's darkest providence. Mark our rebellious want of resignation! When a trouble comes it is not the trial which makes us groan so much as our rebellion against it. It is true the ox goad is thrust into us, but we kick against it, and then it hurts us far more. Like men with naked feet we kick against the pricks. We head our vessel against the stream of God's will, and then murmur because the waves beat violently upon us. An unsubdued will is like a maniac's hand which tears himself. The chastisements which come directly from our heavenly Father are never so hard to bear as the frettings and fumings of our unhumbled self-will. As the bird dashes against the wires of its cage and breaks its own wing, even so do we. If we would take the cross as our gracious Father gives it, it would not gall our shoulders, but since we revolt from it and loathe the burden, our shoulders grow raw and sore, and the load becomes intolerable. More submission, and we should have fewer tears. There are the tears, too, of wounded, injured pride, and how hot and scalding they are! When a man has been ambitious and has failed, how he will weep instead of standing corrected, or gathering up his courage for a wiser venture. When a friend has spoken slightly of us, or an enemy has accused us, how we have had to put our fingers to our hot eye-lids to keep the tears from streaming out, and have felt all the while as full of wretchedness as we well could be. Ah, these are cruel and

wicked tears. God wipe them away from our eyes now! certainly he must do it before we shall be able to enter heaven. How numerous, too, are the tears of unbelief! We manufacture troubles for ourselves by anticipating future ills which may never come, or which, if they do come, may be like the clouds, all “big with mercy,” and “break with blessings on our head.” We get supposing what we should do if such-and-such a thing occurred, which thing God has determined never shall occur. We imagine ourselves in positions where Providence never intends to place us, and so we feel a thousand trials in fearing one. That bottle, I say, ought never to carry within it a tear from a believer’s eyes, and yet it has had whole floods poured into it. Oh, the wickedness of mistrust of God, and the bitterness with which that distrust is made to curse itself. Unbelief makes a rod for its own back; distrust of God is its own punishment; it brings such want of rest, such care, such tribulation of spirit into the mind, that he who loves himself and loves pleasure, had better seek to walk by faith and not by sight. Nor must I forget the scalding drops of anger against our fellow-men, and of petulance and irritation, because we cannot have our way with them; these are black and horrid damps, as noisome as the vaults of Tophet. May we ever be saved from such unholy tears. Sometimes, too, there are streams which arise from depressed spirits, spirits desponding because we have neglected the means of grace and the God of grace. The consolations of God are small with us because we have been seldom in secret prayer; we have lived at a distance from the Most High, and we have fallen into a melancholy state of mind. I thank God that there shall never come another tear from our eyes into that bottle when eternal love shall take us up to dwell with Jesus in his kingdom.

We would never overlook the third bottle, which is the true crystal lachrymatory into which holy tears may drop, tears like

the lachrymæ Christi, the tears of Jesus, so precious in the sight of God. Even these shall cease to flow in heaven. Tears of repentance, like glistening dewdrops fresh from the skies, are stored in this bottle; they are not of the earth, they come from heaven, and yet we cannot carry them thither with us. Good Rowland Hill used to say, repentance was such a sweet companion that the only regret he could have in going to heaven, was in leaving repentance behind him, for he could not shed the tears of repentance there. Oh, to weep for sin! It is so sweet a sorrow that I would a constant weeper be! Like a dripping well, my soul would ever drop with grief that I have offended my loving, tender, gracious God. Tears for Christ's injured honour and slightedness glisten in the crystal of our third bottle. When we hear Jesu's name blasphemed among men, or see his cause driven back in the day of battle, who will not weep then? Who can restrain his lamentations? Such tears are diamonds in Christ's esteem; blessed are the eyes which are mines of such royal treasure. If I cannot win crowns I will at least give tears. If I cannot make men love my Master, yet will I weep in secret places for the dishonour which they do him. These are holy drops, but they are all unknown in heaven. Tears of sympathy are much esteemed by our Lord; when we "weep with those that weep" we do well; these are never to be restrained this side the Jordan. Let them flow! the more of them the better for our spiritual health. Truly, when I think of the griefs of men, and above all, when I have communion with my Saviour in his suffering, I would cry with George Herbert, —

*"Come all ye floods, ye clouds, ye rains,
Dwell in my eyes! My grief hath need
Of all the watery things that nature can
produce!*

Let every vein suck up a river to supply my eyes,

*My weary, weeping eyes, too dry for me,
Unless they get new conduits, fresh supplies,
And with my state agree."*

It were well to go to the very uttermost of weeping if it were always of such a noble kind, as fellowship with Jesus brings. Let us never cease from weeping over sinners as Jesus did over Jerusalem; let us endeavour to snatch the firebrand from the flame, and weep when we cannot accomplish our purpose.

These three receptacles of tears will always be more or less filled by us as long as we are here, but in heaven the first bottle will not be needed, for the wells of earth's grief will all be dried up, and we shall drink from living fountains of water unsalted by a tear: as for the second, we shall have no depravity in our hearts, and so the black fountain will no longer yield its nauseous stream ; and as for the third, there shall be no place amongst celestial occupations for weeping even of the most holy kind. Till then, we must expect to share in human griefs, and instead of praying against them, let us ask that they may be sanctified to us; I mean of course those of the former sort. Let us pray that tribulation may work patience, and patience experience, and experience the hope which maketh not ashamed. Let us pray that as the sharp edge of the graving tool is used upon us it may only remove our excrescences and fashion us into images of our Lord and Master. Let us pray that the fire may consume nothing but the dross, and that the floods may wash away nothing but defilement. May we have to thank God that though before we were afflicted we went astray, yet now have we kept his word; and so shall we see it to be a blessed thing, a divinely wise thing, that we should tread the path of sorrow, and reach the gates of heaven with the tear drops glistening in our eyes.

II. Secondly, EVEN HERE IF WE WOULD HAVE OUR TEARS WIPED AWAY WE CANNOT DO BETTER THAN REPAIR TO OUR GOD.

He is the great tear wiper. Observe, brethren, that God can remove every vestige of grief from the hearts of his people by granting them complete resignation to his will. Our selfhood is the root of our sorrow. If self were perfectly conquered, it would be equal to us whether love ordained our pain or ease, appointed us wealth or poverty. If our will were completely God's will, then pain itself would be attended with pleasure, and sorrow would yield us joy for Christ's sake. As one fire puts out another, so the master passion of love to God and complete absorption in his sacred will quenches the fire of human grief and sorrow. Hearty resignation puts so much honey in the cup of gall that the wormwood is forgotten. As death is swallowed up in victory, so is tribulation swallowed up in complacency and delight in God.

He can also take away our tears by constraining our minds to dwell with delight upon the end which all our trials are working to produce. He can show us that they are working together for good, and as men of understanding, when we see that we shall be essentially enriched by our losses, we shall be content with them; when we see that the medicine is curing us of mortal sickness, and that our sharpest pains are only saving us from pains far more terrible, then shall we kiss the rod and sing in the midst of tribulation, "Sweet affliction!" sweet affliction! since it yields such peaceable fruits of righteousness.

Moreover, he can take every tear from our eye in the time of trial by shedding abroad the love of Jesus Christ in our hearts more plentifully. He can make it clear to us that Christ is afflicted in our affliction. He can indulge us with a delightful sense of the divine virtue which dwells in his sympathy, and

make us rejoice to be co-sufferers with the angel of the covenant. The Saviour can make our hearts leap for joy by reassuring us that we are written on the palms of his hands, and that we shall be with him where he is. Sick beds become thrones, and hovels ripen into palaces when Jesus is made sure to our souls. My brethren, the love of Christ, like a great flood, rolls over the most rugged rocks of afflictions, so high above them that we may float in perfect peace where others are a total wreck. The rage of the storm is all hushed when Christ is in the vessel. The waters saw thee, O Christ, the waters saw thee and were silent at the presence of their king.

The Lord can also take away all present sorrow and grief from us by providentially removing its cause. Providence is full of sweet surprises and unexpected turns. When the sea has ebbed its uttermost it turns again and covers all the sand. When we think the dungeon is fast, and that the bolt is rusted in, he can make the door fly open in a moment. When the river rolls deep and black before us he can divide it with a word, or bridge it with his hand. How often have you found it so in the past? As a pilgrim to Canaan you have passed through the Red Sea, in which you once feared you would be drowned; the bitter wells of Marah were made sweet by God's presence; you fought the Amalekite, you went through the terrible wilderness, you passed by the place of the fiery serpents, and you have yet been kept alive, and so shall you be. As the clear shining cometh after rain, so shall peace succeed your trials. As fly the black clouds before the compelling power of the wind, so will the eternal God make your griefs to fly before the energy of his grace. The smoking furnace of trouble shall be followed by the bright lamp of consolation.

Still, the surest method of getting rid of present tears, is communion and fellowship with God. When I can creep under the wing of my dear God and nestle close to his bosom, let the

world say what it will, and let the devil roar as he pleases, and let my sins accuse and threaten as they may, I am safe, content, happy, peaceful, rejoicing.

*“Let earth against my soul engage,
And hellish darts be hurled;
Now I can smile at Satan’s rage,
And face a frowning world,”*

To say, “My Father, God,” to put myself right into his hand, and feel that I am safe there; to look up to him though it be with tears in my eyes and feel that he loves me, and then to put my head right into his bosom as the prodigal did, and sob my griefs out there into my Father’s heart, oh, this is the death of grief, and the life of all consolation. Is not Jehovah called the God of all comfort? You will find him so, beloved. He has been “our help in ages past;” he is “our hope for years to come.” If he had not been my help, then had my soul perished utterly in the day of its weariness and its heaviness. Oh, I bear testimony for him this day that you cannot go to him and pour out your heart before him without finding a delightful solace. When your friend cannot wipe away the tear, when you yourself with your strongest reasonings, and your boldest efforts cannot constrain yourself to resignation; when your heart beats high, and seems as if it would burst with grief, then ye people pour out your hearts before him. God is a refuge for us. He is our castle and high tower, our refuge and defence. Only go ye to him, and ye shall find that even here on earth God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes.

III. Now we shall have to turn our thoughts to what is the real teaching of the text, namely, THE REMOVAL OF ALL TEARS FROM THE BLESSED ONES ABOVE.

There are many reasons why glorified spirits cannot weep. These are well known to you, but let us just hint at them. All outward causes of grief are gone. They will never hear the toll of the knell in heaven. The mattock and the shroud are unknown things there. The horrid thought of death never flits across an immortal spirit. They are never parted; the great meeting has taken place to part no more. Up yonder they have no losses and crosses in business. "They serve God day and night in his temple." They know no broken friendships there. They have no ruined hearts, no blighted prospects. They know even as they are known, and they love even as they are loved. No pain can ever fall on them; as yet they have no bodies, but when their bodies shall be raised from the grave they shall be spiritualized so that they shall not be capable of grief. The tear-gland shall be plucked away; although much may be there that is human, at least the tear-gland shall be gone, they shall have no need of that organ; their bodies shall be unsusceptible of grief; they shall rejoice for ever. Poverty, famine, distress, nakedness, peril, persecution, slander, all these shall have ceased. "The sun shall not light on them, nor any heat." "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more," and therefore well may their tears cease to flow.

Again, all inward evils will have been removed by the perfect sanctification wrought in them by the Holy Ghost. No evil of heart, of unbelief in departing from the living God, shall vex them in Paradise; no suggestions of the arch enemy shall be met and assisted by the uprisings of iniquity within. They shall never be led to think hardly of God, for their hearts shall be all love; sin shall have no sweetness to them, for they shall be

perfectly purified from all depraved desires. There shall be no lusts of the eye, no lusts of the flesh, no pride of life to be snares to their feet. Sin is shut out, and they are shut in. They are for ever blessed, because they are without fault before the throne of God. What a heaven must it be to be without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing! Well may they cease to mourn who have ceased to sin.

All fear of change also has been for ever shut out. They know that they are eternally secure. Saints on earth are fearful of falling, some believers even dream of falling away; they think God will forsake them, and that men will persecute and take them. No such fears can vex the blessed ones who view their Father's face. Countless cycles may revolve, but eternity shall not be exhausted, and while eternity endures, their immortality and blessedness shall co-exist with it. They dwell within a city which shall never be stormed, they bask in a sun which shall never set, they swim in a flood-tide which shall never ebb, they drink of a river which shall never dry, they pluck fruit from a tree which shall never be withered. Their blessedness knows not the thought, which would act like a canker at its heart, that it might, perhaps, pass away and cease to be. They cannot, therefore, weep, because they are infallibly secure, and certainly assured of their eternal blessedness.

Why should they weep, when every desire is gratified? They cannot wish for anything which they shall not have. Eye and ear, heart and hand, judgment, imagination, hope, desire, will, every faculty shall be satisfied. All their capacious powers can wish they shall continually enjoy. Though "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard the things which God hath prepared for them that love him," yet we know enough, by the revelation of the Spirit, to understand that they are supremely blessed. The joy of Christ, which is an infinite fulness of delight, is in them.

They bathe themselves in the bottomless, shoreless sea of Infinite Beatitude.

Still, dear friends, this does not quite account for the fact, that all tears are wiped from their eyes. I like better the text which tells us that God shall do it, and I want you to think with me, of fountains of tears which exist even in heaven, so that the celestial ones must inevitably weep if God did not by a perpetual miracle take away their tears. It strikes me, that if God himself did not interfere by a perpetual outflow of abundant consolations, the glorified have very deep cause for weeping. You will say, "How is this?" Why, in the first place, if it were not for this, what regrets they must have for their past sins. The more holy a man is, the more he hates sin. It is a token of growth in sanctification, not that repentance becomes less acute, but that it becomes more and more deep. Surely, dear friends, when we shall be made perfectly holy, we shall have a greater hatred of sin. If on earth we could be perfectly holy, why, methinks we should do little else than mourn, to think that so foul, and black, and venomous a thing as sin had ever stained us; that we should offend against so good, so gracious, so tender, so abundantly loving a God. Why, the sight of Christ, "the Lamb in the midst of the throne," would make them remember the sin from which he purged them; the sight of their heavenly Father's perfection would be blinding to them, if it were not that by some sacred means, which we know not, God wipes away all these tears from their eyes; and though they cannot but regret that they have sinned, yet perhaps they know that sin has been made to glorify God by the overcoming power of Almighty grace; that sin has been made to be a black foil, a sort of setting for the sparkling jewel of eternal, sovereign grace, and it may be that for this reason they shed no tears over their past lives. They sing, "Unto him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood:" but they sing that heavenly song

without a tear in their eyes; I cannot understand how this may be, for I know I could not do so as I now am; let this be the best reason, that God has wiped away the tears from their eyes.

Again, do you not think, beloved, that the thought of the vast expense of shame and woe which the Saviour lavished for their redemption must, in the natural order of things, be a constant source of grief? We sing sometimes that hymn which reminds us of the angelic song before the throne, and in one of its verses the poet says: —

*“But when to Calvary they turn,
Silent their harps abide;
Suspended songs a moment mourn
The God that loved and died.”*

Now, that is natural and poetical, but it is not true, for you know very well that there are no suspended songs in heaven, and that there is no mourning even over Christ “that loved and died.” It seems to me, that if I were thoroughly spiritualized and in such a holy state as those are in heaven, I could not look at the Lamb without tears in my eyes. How could I think of those five wounds; that bloody sweat in Gethsemane; that cruel crowning with the thorns in Gabbatha; that mockery and shame at Golgotha— how could I think of it without tears? How could I feel that he loved me and gave himself for me, without bursting into a passion of holy affection and sorrow? Tears seem to be the natural expression of such hallowed joy and grief—

*“Love and grief my heart dividing,
With my tears his feet I’ll bathe.”*

I must think it would be so in heaven, if it were not that by

a glorious method, I know not how, God shall wipe away even those tears from their eyes. Does it not need the interference of God to accomplish this wonder?

Is there not another cause for grief, namely, wasted opportunities. Beloved, when we once ascend to heaven, there will be no more feeding of Christ's hungry people; no giving drink to the thirsty; no visiting his sick ones, or his imprisoned ones; no clothing of the naked; there will be no instructing the ignorant; no holding forth the Word of God among "a crooked and perverse generation." It has been often and truly said, if there could be regrets in heaven, those regrets would be, that we have wasted so many opportunities of honouring Christ on earth, opportunities which will then be past for ever. Now in heaven their hearts are not steeled and hardened, so that they can look back upon sins of omission without sorrow. I believe there will be the tenderest form of conscience there, for perfect purity would not be consistent with any degree of hardness of heart. If they be sensitive and tender in heart, it is inevitable that they should look back with regret upon the failures of the life below unless some more mighty emotion should overwhelm that of contrition. I can say, beloved, if God would take me to heaven this morning, if he did not come in, and by a special act of his omnipotence, dry up that fountain of tears, I should almost forget the glories of Paradise in the midst of my own shame, that I have not preached more earnestly, and have not prayed more fervently, and laboured more abundantly for Christ. That text, to which we heard a reference from a dear brother during the week, where Paul says, "I call God to witness that for the space of three years I ceased not night and day with tears, to warn everyone of you," is a text that we cannot any of us read without blushes and tears; and in heaven, methinks, if I saw the Apostle Paul, I must burst out into weeping, if it were not for this text, which says that "God

shall wipe away all tears," and these among them. Who but the Almighty God could do this!

Perhaps, again, another source of tears may suggest itself to you; namely, regrets in heaven for our mistakes, and misrepresentations, and unkindnesses towards other Christian brethren. How surprised we shall be to meet in heaven some whom we did not love on earth! We would not commune with them at the Lord's table. We would not own that they were Christians. We looked at them very askance if we saw them in the street. We were jealous of all their operations. We suspected their zeal as being nothing better than rant, and we looked upon their best exertions as having sinister motives at the bottom. We said many hard things, and felt a great many more than we said. When we shall see these unknown and unrecognized brethren in heaven will not their presence naturally remind us of our offences against Christian love and spiritual unity? I cannot suppose a perfect man, looking at another perfect man, without regretting that he ever illtreated him: it seems to me to be the trait of a gentleman, a Christian, and of a perfectly sanctified man above all others, that he should regret having misunderstood, and misconstrued, and misrepresented one who was as dear to Christ as himself. I am sure as I go round among the saints in heaven, I cannot (in the natural order of things) help feeling "I did not assist you as I ought to have done. I did not sympathize with you as I ought to have done. I spoke a hard word to you. I was estranged from you;" and I think you would all have to feel the same; inevitably you must, if it were not that by some heavenly means, I know not how, the eternal God shall so overshadow believers with the abundant bliss of his own self that even that cause of tears shall be wiped away.

Has it never struck you, dear friends, that if you go to heaven and see your dear children left behind unconverted, it would naturally be a cause of sorrow? When my mother told

me that if I perished she would have to say "Amen" to my condemnation, I knew it was true and it sounded very terrible, and had a good effect on my mind; but at the same time I could not help thinking, "Well, you will be very different from what you are now," and I did not think she would be improved. I thought "Well, I love to think of your weeping over me far better than to think of you as a perfect being, with a tearless eye, looking on the damnation of your own child." It really is a very terrible spectacle, the thought of a perfect being looking down upon hell, for instance, as Abraham did, and yet feeling no sorrow; for you will recollect that, in the tones in which Abraham addressed the rich man, there is nothing of pity, there is not a single syllable which betokens any sympathy with him in his dreadful woes; and one does not quite comprehend that perfect beings, God-like beings, beings full of love, and everything that constitutes the glory of God's complete nature, should yet be unable to weep, even over hell itself; they cannot weep over their own children lost and ruined! Now, how is this? If you will tell me, I shall be glad, for I cannot tell you. I do not believe that there will be one atom less tenderness, that there will be one fraction less of amiability, and love, and sympathy—I believe there will be more—but that they will be in some way so refined and purified, that while compassion for suffering is there, detestation of sin shall be there to balance it, and a state of complete equilibrium shall be attained. Perfect acquiescence in the divine will is probably the secret of it; but it is not my business to guess; I do not know what handkerchief the Lord will use, but I know that he will wipe all tears away from their faces, and these tears among them.

Yet, once again, it seems to me that spirits before the throne, taking, as they must do, a deep interest in everything which concerns the honour of the Lord Jesus Christ, must feel deeply grieved when they see the cause of truth imperilled, and

the kingdom of Christ, for a time put back. Think of Luther, or Wickliffe, or John Knox, as they see the advances of Popery just now. Take John Knox first, if you will. Think of him looking down and seeing cathedrals rising in Scotland, dedicated to the service of the Pope and the devil. Oh, how the stern old man, even in glory, methinks, would begin to shake himself; and the old lion lash his sides once more, and half wish that he could come down and pull the nests to pieces that the rooks might fly away. Think of Wickliffe looking down on this country where the gospel has been preached so many years and seeing monks in the Church of England, and seeing spring up in our national establishment everywhere, not disguised Popery as it was ten years ago, but stark naked Popery, downright Popery that unblushingly talks about the “Catholic Church,” and is not even Anglican any longer. What would Wickliffe say? Why, methink as he leans over the battlements of heaven, unless Wickliffe be mightily altered, and I cannot suppose he is (except for the better, and that would make him more tender-hearted and more zealous for God still), he must weep to think that England has gone back so far, and that on the dial of Ahaz the sun has beat a retreat. I do not know how it is they do not weep in heaven, but they do not. The souls under the altar cry, “How long? how long? how long?” There comes up a mighty intercession from those who were slaughtered in the days gone by for Christ: their prayer rises, “How long? how long? how long?” and God as yet does not avenge his own elect though they cry day and night unto him. Yet that delay does not cost them a single tear. They feel so sure that the victory will come, they anticipate so much the more splendid a triumph because of its delay, and therefore they do both patiently hope and quietly wait to see the salvation of God. They know that without us they cannot be made perfect, and so they wait till we are taken up, that the whole company may be completed,

and that then the soul may be dressed in its body, and they may be perfected in their bliss: they wait but they do not weep. They wait and they cry, but in their cry no sorrow has a place. Now I do not understand this, because it seems to me that the more I long for the coming of Christ, the more I long to see his kingdom extended, the more I shall weep when things go wrong, when I see Christ blasphemed, his cross trampled in the mire, and the devil's kingdom established; but the reason is all in this, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

I thought I would just indicate to you why it says that God does it. It strikes me that these causes of tears could not be removed by an angel, could not be taken away by any form of spiritual enjoyment apart from the direct interposition of Almighty God. Think of all these things and wonder over them, and you will recall many other springs of grief which must have flowed freely if Omnipotence had not dried them up completely; then ask how it is that the saints do not weep and do not sorrow; and you cannot get any other answer than this — God has done it in a way unknown to us, for ever taking away from them the power to weep.

IV. And now, beloved, SHALL WE BE AMONG THIS HAPPY COMPANY?

Here is the question, and the context enables us to answer it. "They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." There is their character. "Therefore are they before the throne of God." The blood is a sacred argument for their being there, the precious blood. Observe, "they washed their robes." It was not merely their feet, their worst parts, but they washed their robes, their best parts. A man's robes are his most honoured attire, he puts them on, and he does not mind our seeing his robes. There may be filthiness beneath, but the

robes are generally the cleanest of all. But you see they washed even them. Now it is the mark of a Christian that he not only goes to Christ to wash away his black sins, but to wash his duties too. I would not pray a prayer unwashed with Jesu's blood; I would not like a hymn I have sung to go up to heaven except it had first been bathed in blood; if I would desire to be clothed with zeal as with a cloak, yet I must wash the cloak in blood; though I would be sanctified by the Holy Spirit and wear imparted righteousness as a raiment of needlework, yet I must wash even that in blood. What say you, dear friends? have you washed in blood? The meaning of it is, have you trusted in the atoning sacrifice? "Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin." Have you taken Christ to be your all in all? Are you now depending on him? If so, out of deep distress you shall yet ascend leaning on your Beloved to the throne of God, and to the bliss which awaiteth his chosen. But if not, "there is none other name," there is no other way. Your damnation will be as just as it will be sure. Christ is "the way," but if ye will not tread it ye shall not reach the end; Christ is "the truth," but if you will not believe him, you shall not rejoice; Christ is "the life," but if you will not receive him you shall abide among the dead, and be cast out among the corrupt. From such a doom may the Lord deliver us, and give us a simple confidence in the divine work of the Redeemer, and to him shall be the praise eternally.

Amen.

REVELATION 8

THIRTY-NINE
PREPARING FOR THE WEEK OF
PRAYER

SERMON #3282

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 8:3-4

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN 1911

*“And another angel came and stood at the altar,
having a golden censer; and then was given
unto him much incense, that he should offer
it with the prayers of all saints upon the
golden altar which was before the throne.
And the smoke of the incense which came
with the prayers of the saints, ascended up
before God out of the angel’s hand.”*

REVELATION 8:3-4

I SUPPOSE that there will be very little doubt among you that the “Angel” mentioned here was either our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, or a special angelic messenger sent to represent Him. You remember that under the Mosaic dispensation, there was

to be an altar of shittim wood, overlaid with pure gold, and that Aaron was to burn sweet incense thereon every morning and every evening. In like manner, our Great High Priest is here represented as standing at the golden altar which is before the Throne of God, having in His hand a golden censer full of incense, the fragrance of which would give acceptance to the prayers of the saints for His sake—

“Great Advocate, almighty Friend,
On Him our humble hopes depend—
Our cause can never, never fail,
For Jesus pleads and must prevail.”

I am going to talk to you, first, concerning the prayers of the saints. concerning the intercession of Christ. And then we shall notice the result of the sending of Christ’s intercession with the saints’ prayers.

1. So first, I am to speak about THE PRAYERS OF THE SAINTS.

What a very interesting and delightful spectacle the Christian Church will present during the coming week of united prayer! It is an everyday sight to see Christians at prayer, for Believers are to “pray without ceasing.” But doubtless, as long as the Church exists and men and women are what they are, there always will be special seasons when the fervor of the suppliants becomes more ardent than at ordinary times, when their desires grow more intense and their prayers, therefore, ascend in a greater volume before the eternal Throne of God. We sing that—

“Satan trembles when he sees,

The weakest saint upon his knees—

then how much more must he tremble when he sees thousands upon thousands of the people of God drawing near with one heart to the Throne of the heavenly Grace! Next to the angels in Heaven praising God, I think the fairest sight that ever was seen is that of the saints of earth, of almost all names and denominations, gathered in concert around the Mercy Seat! Notwithstanding all the divisions among Christians, there are certain Truths upon which they are all agreed, and this will be plainly manifested during the coming week. We shall see, met together in the same House of Prayer, Brothers and Sisters holding various sentiments. We shall see some who love the Lord Jesus Christ in the Established Church and others who are outside the establishment uniting heartily in prayer. We shall see those who worship God in a liturgical sense and those who worship Him without a liturgy, joining with one heart and mind in imploring a blessing upon the one common cause of Jesus Christ and upon the world at large.

Moreover, these united prayers will be going up all over the world—at least it will be so to a very large extent. You may journey round the globe with the sun, and wherever you go you shall see Brothers and Sisters assembled in prayer. It is said of the Queen's dominions that the sun never sets upon them—and it may be said this week of the earnest united cries of the Lord's people that they will arise from practically every land on which the sun shall shine! God shall be wor

“One army of the living God.”

This is true every day, to a greater or lesser degree, but it will be made more apparent during the days of this week, and I,

for one, rejoice that the prayers of the saints shall thus together ascend before the Throne of God!

It is interesting, too, to notice the subjects that have been selected as themes for special prayer. I think the Lord has guided the committee of the Evangelical Alliance in the selection. We are requested on Monday to present "penitential confession of sin and the acknowledgment of personal, social, and national blessings, with supplication for Divine Mercy through the Atonement of our Savior, Jesus Christ." This is a good beginning for the week of prayer—it should rightly commence with repentance. The salty tears of penitence will be an acceptable offering, just as, under the Levitical Law it was commanded, "with all your offering you shall offer salt." Then on Tuesday we are asked to pray for the conversion of the ungodly, for the success of missions among Jews and Gentiles, and for a Divine Blessing to accompany the efforts made to evangelize the unconverted of all ranks and all around us. "What a comprehensive subject, taking in both Jews and Gentiles, both bond and free, and including those who are abroad with those who are around us at home! Then on Wednesday our supplications are asked "for the Christian Church and ministry; for Sunday schools and all other Christian agencies; and for the increase of spiritual life, activity and holiness in all Believers." Here again is a comprehensive subject. How much we who are in the ministry need your prayers! "Brethren pray for us." The whole Church needs prayer, but especially the captains in the Lord's ranks who have to be in the thick of the fight with the shots of the enemy flying all around them! Then on Thursday the subjects for intercession are "for the afflicted and oppressed; that slavery may be abolished; that persecution may cease; and that Christian love may expand to the comfort and relief of the destitute in all lands." I do not know how some professing Christians will be

able to join in the supplication that slavery may be abolished, but we can fervently unite in it with a pure heart! May the Lord graciously hear that prayer. And if He shall hear it from the battlefields of America, we shall bless his name even for the scourge of war if that accursed slavery can be ended! Then on Friday we are urged to pray “for nations, for kings, and all who are in authority; for the cessation of war—for the prevalence of peace; and for the holy observance of the Sabbath.” And then to conclude, on Saturday, “generally for the large outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the revival and extension of pure Christianity throughout the world.”

Now when the Church comes before God with such large requests as these, I do earnestly trust that the united supplication will be the means of bringing down one of the greatest and richest blessings that the world has ever received! God grant that it may be so!—

“Who but You, Almighty Spirit,
Can the heathen world reclaim?
Men may preach, but till You favor,
Heathens will be still the same.
Mighty Spirit,
Witness to the Savior’s name!
All our hopes, and prayers, and labors,
Must be vain without Your aid,
But You will not disappoint us.
All is true that you have said—
Gracious Spirit,
O’er the world Your influence spread.”

But turning away from that aspect of the Church’s prayers which will be presented during the coming week, I want you to notice some points suggested by the text concerning the prayer

of the saints. The first is the communion of all prayer. What does the angel do with the prayers of all saints? Does he put one of them here and another there? Does he put one on the altar and another under the altar? No, no—he puts them all into the golden censer! Here comes a prayer full of faith from a warm and loving heart filled with ardent desires for God’s Glory! And behind it comes another, a poor starveling prayer. It is sincere, but it comes from the lips of Mr. Little Faith. There is not much fervor about it, but it is as much as that feeble Brother could pray. Both these prayers are put into the same golden censer. Some of you Christian people have believing friends in Australia—they pray, and their prayers get into the censer. You pray, and your prayers get there, too. Our fathers prayed, and their prayers were put into the golden censer. We pray, and our children will pray after us, but our prayers and theirs and our fathers’ shall all go into the same censor! What communion there is here, then, among all Believers in Jesus! When you really draw near to God and other saints draw near to Him, you also draw near to them. No, more, since Jesus Christ, Himself, prays when you pray, you have fellowship with Him! And as the Holy Spirit inspires your prayers if they were according to the mind of God, you also have fellowship with the Spirit and through Him with the Father! Thus prayer becomes a glorious bond which binds God and all His people together in one sacred bundle of life! And to be without prayer is to be outside that blessed bundle.

The next thing I ask you to observe is the universality of prayer. The incense was given to the angel “that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.” I have already pointed out to you that Jesus Christ takes the prayers that come from all sorts of saints. Now I want you to notice that he takes all the true prayers that come to Him. There are some prayers that are so little and so feeble

that you would think that they never could get to God at all—but it is with them as it was with some of the creatures in Noah's Ark. I never can comprehend how the snails managed to get into the ark, yet they did. They must have started very early. There are some people's prayers which seem to travel almost as slowly as those snails did, yet they do get to Heaven and they are presented by Christ with all the rest of the saints' prayers before His Father's Throne. If you take a single drop of water from the sea and analyze it, you will find that the same elements are in it that are in the whole ocean. So if I can breathe but one sincere desire towards Heaven, if my prayer is merely—

“The upward glancing of an eye
When none but God is near”—

all the elements of prevailing prayer are in that one desire or that one childlike glance! A diamond is a diamond be it ever so small. It may be so tiny that the Queen would not put it into the most prominent place in her crown, still it might be permitted to glitter somewhere. Being a diamond, it must not be thrown away, for it has its value. So, my Brother, your prayer may never edify your Brothers and Sisters. It may not be suitable to be presented in public, but if your soul is in it, if your heart goes out towards God through your poor feeble prayer, it will be so precious in His sight that He will not have it thrown away! In the day when Christ makes up His jewels, that tiny gem shall be presented to His Father as well as the greatest and costliest jewels under His charge! I say this because I am aware that there are many Christians who think their prayers are not heard because they are such poor things. But we are not impartial or wise judges of the value of our own prayers. I am persuaded that often, when we think we have prayed as we

ought, we have only been feeding our own vanity—and that at other times, when we have found that we could not pray, that we could hardly express a single desire, but could only sigh and groan before the Lord—then we have really prayed and God has heard our prayer! Whatever our own feelings may be about the matter, it is certain that every true prayer gets into the golden censer that our Great High Priest swings before the eternal Throne of God. There is not one of those birds that we send up towards Heaven which does not really reach its destination. If its own wings are not strong enough to bear it up so high, Christ reaches His almighty hand down and lifts it all the rest of the way! Somehow all the true prayers of all the saints must get into the golden censer in Christ's hand.

Note also the acceptability of prayer. God has made provision for ensuring the acceptance of His people's prayers. "There was given unto the angel much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne." It is that incense which makes our poor prayers acceptable to God—it is not the merit of our prayers that secures the gracious answers to them, but the power of Christ's prevailing intercession! Our pleas would be useless if they were presented by themselves—it is His plea that always avails with His Father. Jesus Christ has been appointed to this high office so that He may take our supplications and present them before the Throne of the Most High. When our government appoints certain officers to look after the affairs of the poor people of this land, there ought not to be any needy ones applying in vain to them for help. And, Christian, as Jesus Christ has been entrusted with the task of presenting your prayers acceptably before His Father, you may rest assured that He will accomplish it—so be of good courage and know assuredly that He will add the "much incense" of His intercession to your supplications—and so shall they ascend acceptably before God in a

cloud of sweetly smelling smoke! No true prayer from the heart of a true child of God shall miss its mark—all shall reach the heavenly target. Your petition, my Brother or Sister, shall meet with acceptance as well as mine. Do not think, Believer, that God will ignore your heartfelt supplications even though you are almost unknown among your fellow Christians and you feel yourself to be the least of all saints. If you dare to think that you are numbered among the saints at all, do not imagine because you could not put two sentences together at the Prayer Meeting that, therefore, your prayers do not reach the ear and heart of God. I can assure you that your petitions are put into the golden censer just as surely as were those of John, the beloved Apostle to whom this wondrous Revelation was given! And when the sacred fire is applied to them, they yield as sweet a fragrance to the Most High as do the supplications of the greatest and noblest of the Lord's children. According to the text, the smoke of the incense ascended up before God with the prayers of all the saints—none of them would have been acceptable without the incense—but with the incense all ascended up before God.

II. Now, secondly, I must speak briefly concerning JESUS CHRIST'S INTERCESSION.

And first I beg you to notice

what a fit Person Jesus Christ is to intercede for us. He is Man. He knows the imperfection

of our prayers, He understands our needs and frailties and can sympathize with us in presenting our petitions before His Father's Throne. He is Man who has finished His own work and can, therefore, take our work into His hands and bring it to perfection. He is always acceptable to His Father, so that when He presents our case before His Father's Throne, He has such

a claim to be heard because of all that He has done and suffered—that His advocacy of our case must prevail! Moreover, He is also God, “the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth.” If I can have the wellbeloved Son of God to plead for me, what other intercessor can I need? Is He not the best Advocate of whom your heart can conceive? No, more—if He had not told you that it is so, could you have ever dreamed that He, who is the brightness of His Father’s Glory and the express image of His Person, would have condescended to become intercessor for such worthless worms as we are? O You glorious Christ, in Your wondrous Person as both Man and God we worship You with all our hearts! And we bless the Lord that You are our Great High Priest with the golden censer, into which our poor prayers shall be put and then, when perfumed with the much incense of Your wondrous intercession, shall be presented acceptably before Your Father in Heaven!—

“Immense compassion reigns
In our Immanuel’s heart!
He condescends to act
A Mediator’s part.
He is our Friend and Brother, too,
Divinely kind, Divinely true!”

Having noticed the fitness of our Intercessor’s Person, consider next, the fitness of the place where He pleads. He is represented as standing at the altar when He pleads for us with His Father. It is on the ground of His own atoning Sacrifice. When He stands at the altar He does, as it were, say to His Father, “I am He that lives, and was dead. My hands and feet were pierced by the nails and My side by the soldier’s spear. Hear Me on behalf of those for whom I laid down My life.” Thus our great Intercessor speaks with authority when He

pleads for us before His Father's Throne. Believer, you are never so prevalent in prayer as when you stand at the altar of Atonement! Your supplications are sure to succeed when you plead the precious blood of Jesus! So you may be certain that Jesus will not stand at the altar in vain. Shall the Father see His Son's blood shed for many for the remission of their sins, and yet not yield to His intercession? O God, can You remember Your Son's agonies and groans in Gethsemane and yet refuse His requests? Can You think of all that He endured at Golgotha and yet not hear Him when He intercedes for those for whom He there laid down His life? Oh, no, that is impossible! Jesus must succeed when He stands at the altar and presents the prayers of His people before His Father's Throne—

“Jesus, my Great High Priest,
Offered His blood, and died!
My guilty conscience seeks
No sacrifice beside.
His powerful blood did once atone;
And now it pleads before the Throne.”

Note next how Christ presents the prayers of the saints to His Father. He does not offer them just as they are, but He adds to them that “much incense” which makes them acceptable to God. One thing that Jesus does with our prayers is to make them correct where they are in error. Sometimes, dear friends come to me and ask me to send petitions for them to certain people who may be able to help them. But I often find that the words are not spelled correctly, the grammar is faulty, and the petition, itself, is not very plain. So I say to the petitioners, “I know what it is that you need, so I will write out your petition and add my own name to it, and then it may succeed.” So, dear Friends, we bring to Christ our poor petitions, all blotted and

misspelled, but He does not present them as they are—He knows what we mean and what we need—so He writes them out for us, puts His own signature at the bottom and thus they become prayers upon which God can look with approval!

The text says that there was given to the angel “much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.” There is little enough of our prayers in the golden censer that is in Christ’s hand, but He adds much of His merit to them and so makes them acceptable to His Father. As the smoke of the incense ascends up before God, perhaps you say, “I never thought that my prayer would smell as sweetly as that.” No, it would not have done so by itself, but Jesus Christ added the “much incense” to it and that make it so fragrant. When you say, “My prayer is so poor that it will never prevail with God,” you do not know what it will be when Christ has added His intercession to it! If you could pray a prayer that seemed to you a thousand times better than those you now present, I am not sure that it would not really be any better. If you said to yourself, “There, that prayer will do, it will find its way to God all by itself,” I am certain that it would never reach the Throne of God! But if, when we have prayed, we feel that we must have Christ’s intercession to make our prayers acceptable, He will add the “much incense” to our poor petitions and so they shall prevail with God!

III. Now, lastly, and very briefly, notice THE RESULT OF THE BLENDING OF CHRIST’S INTERCESSION WITH HIS PEOPLE’S PRAYERS.

When the “much incense” was offered with the prayers of the saints upon the golden altar which was before the Throne of God, we are told that “the smoke of the incense, which came

with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God.” And, Christian, you may have what you will of God if you know how to get the “much incense” of Christ’s intercession put with your prayers! Church of God, you may utterly rout your foes if you can pray after this fashion! If our prayers have prevailed with God, they will certainly prevail against all our adversaries! The Spartans called their spears their walls, and Christians may well call their prayers their walls. There is a secret of prevailing in prayer which you may know to your heart’s comfort if you will learn the lesson of our text, and then, as your prayer is presented by Christ to His Father, the answer will come down in blessings which many others will be glad to share with you.

I want, in closing, to remind you of the remarkable verses that follow my text. The saints have been praying and Christ has presented their petitions to His Father—what will be the result of their praying and His intercession? If you did not know the context, you would probably answer, “We expect the whole world to be converted.” But you know that this was not the case. The first of the seven angels blew the trumpet “and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood.” Then the second angel sounded, “and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea.” And so it goes on with woe, upon woe, woe upon woe. Is this the answer to the saints’ prayer? Yes, it is even so. Whenever the saints are especially earnest in prayer, and whenever their prayers rise up acceptably to God, you may depend upon it that their great adversary, the devil, will not remain quietly at home. What then? Shall we therefore go in fear of the adversary? By no means! He will have all the greater wrath as his time becomes shorter and shorter, but our trust is in Him who is mightier than all the powers of darkness and who will overthrow them all at the appointed time. So be not troubled as you read of all the woes following the blowing of the six trumpets, but go on reading

until you come to the seventh! There you will get the true answer to the saints' prayers—all those woes must come first to prepare for the Glory that is to follow! At the 11th verse, you will read, "And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in Heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign forever and ever." So you see that there shall be a glorious end to the prayers of the saints and the intercession of their Great High Priest! He shall be proclaimed "King of kings, and Lord of lords," "and He shall reign forever and ever." If, during this coming year, we should see more sin, more superstition, more Popery and more infidelity than we have ever seen before, shall we say that God did not hear His people's prayers? Oh no! All these evils must reach their climax and then shall come their downfall! It is not altogether an evil thing to have the devil thoroughly awakened. If we should again have a time of persecution, with more blasphemy and more wickedness than we have ever yet known, the Lord's people would be stirred up to pray more earnestly than ever, to work with greater zeal for His cause and to fight the good fight of faith as they have never yet done! Sound the trumpet, wake up the warriors of the Cross, let every good soldier of Jesus Christ gird his sword upon his thigh, for the first result of prayer is battle, storm, terror, earthquake and woe upon woe! But the end is that to which the eye of faith looks forward when the reeling, and the shaking, and the tempest, and the whirlwind are all over! Then shall come the everlasting calm and the triumphant reign of Jesus. "The Glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it." "Therefore, my beloved Brothers and Sisters, be you steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

And also, “continue in prayer and watch in the same with thanksgiving.”

There may be some here, and doubtless there are some who have never truly prayed in their lives. What a blessed beginning it would be to the week of united prayer if they would begin to pray tonight! But, my Brother, or my Sister, it is no use for you to attempt to pray without faith, “for he that comes to God must believe that He is” and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.” And what is faith? Why, faith is trust, confidence, reliance upon Christ! If anyone among you will trust the Lord Jesus Christ tonight. If you will put your whole confidence in Him. If you will rely upon Him for time and eternity—especially if you trust to the merit of His great atoning Sacrifice, He will prove Himself to be worthy of your trust and He will save you with His everlasting salvation! No, more than that, for if you trust Christ, you are saved, for, “he that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” Then when you are saved, you can join your believing prayers to the prayers of all the rest of the saints—and your prayers shall be put with theirs in the golden censer in the hand of our Great High Priest—and He will add to them the, “much incense,” of His intercession and so they shall ascend acceptably before the Throne of God! May the Lord graciously teach you the holy arts of faith and prayer for His dear name’s sake!

Amen.

REVELATION 11

FORTY
A VOICE FROM HEAVEN

JANUARY 1, 1870

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 14:12,13

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 21

“Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.”

REVELATION 14:12-13.

THE text speaks of a voice from heaven which said, “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.” The witness of that voice is not needed upon every occasion, for even the commonest

observer is compelled to feel concerning many of the righteous that their deaths are blessed. Balaam, with all his moral short-sightedness, could say, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." That is the case when death comes in peaceful fashion. The man has lived a calm, godly, consistent life; he has lived as long as he could well have wished to live, and in dying he sees his children and his children's children gathered around his bed. What a fine picture the old man makes, as he sits up with that snowy head supported by snowy pillows. Hear him as he tells his children that goodness and mercy have followed him all the days of his life, and now he is going to dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. See the seraphic smile which lights up his face as he bids them farewell, and assures them that he already hears the harpers harping with their harps, — bids them stay those tears, and weep not for him but for themselves — charges them to follow him so far as he has followed Christ, and to meet him at the right hand of the Judge in the day of his appearing. Then the old man, almost without a sigh, leans back, and is present with the Lord.

*"Heaven waits not the last moment; owns her
friends
On this side death, and points them out to men;
A lecture silent but of sovereign power!
To vice, confusion — and to virtue peace."*

Even the blind bat's-eyed worldling can see that "blessed are the dead which die in the Lord" in such a fashion as that, nor is it difficult to perceive that this is the case in many other instances. We have ourselves known several good men and women who were afraid of death, and were much of their life-time subject to bondage, but they went to bed and fell asleep and never woke again in this world, and as far as appearances

go they could never have known so much as one single pang in departure, but fell asleep among mortals to awake amid the angels. Truly, such gentle loosings of the cable, such fordings of Jordan dry shod, such ascents of the celestial hills with music at every step, are beyond measure desirable, and we need no voice out of the excellent glory to proclaim that blessed are the dead who in such a case die in the Lord.

But that was not the picture which John had before his mind. It was quite another — a picture grim and black to mortal eye. The sounds which meet the ear are not those of music, nor the whispered consolations of friends, but quite the reverse; all is painful, terrible, and the very opposite of blessed, so far as strikes the eye and ear. Hence it became needful that there should be a voice from heaven to say, “Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord.” I will give you the picture. The man of God is on the rack. They are turning that infernal machine with all their might; they have dragged every bone from its place; they have exercised their tortures till every nerve of his body thrills with agony. He is flung into a dark and loathsome dungeon, and left there to recover strength enough to be led in derision through the streets. Upon his head they have placed a cap painted with devils, and all his garments they have bedizened with the resemblance of fiends and flames of hell. And now, with a shaveling priest on each side holding up before him a superstitious emblem, and bidding him adore the Virgin or worship the cross, the good man, loaded with chains, goes through the street, say of Madrid or Antwerp, to the place prepared for his execution. “An act of faith,” they call it — an *auto da fe* — and an act of heroic faith it is indeed when the man of God takes his place at the stake, in his shirt, with an iron chain about his loins, and is fastened to the tree, where he must stand, and burn “quick to the death.” Can you see him as they kindle the faggots beneath him, and the flames begin to

consume his quivering flesh till he is all ablaze and burning — burning without a cry, though fiercely tormented by the fire? Now assuredly is that voice from heaven wanted, and you can hear it, “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord,” — blessed even when they die like this. “Here is the patience of the saints,” and, in the esteem of angels and of glorified spirits, such a death may under many aspects be adjudged to be more blessed than the peaceful deathbed of the saint who had some fellowship with Jesus, but was not so made to drink of his cup, and to be baptised with his baptism, as to die a painful and ignominious death as a witness for the truth. It must have been a dreadful thing to watch the rabble rout hurrying to Smithfield, to stand there and see the burning of the saints. It would have been a more fearful thing still, if possible, to have been in the dungeons of the Low Countries and seen the Anabaptists put to death in secret. In a dungeon dark and pestilential there is placed a huge vat of water, and the faithful witness to Scriptural baptism is drowned, drowned for following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, drowned alone where no eye could pity, and no voice from out of the crowd could shout a word of help and comfort. Men hear only the coarse jests of the murderers who have given the dipper his last dip, but the ear of faith can hear ringing through the dungeon the voice, “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.” True, through the connection of their names with a fanatic band, these holy ancestors of ours have gained scant honour here, yet their record is on high; blessed they are, and blessed they shall be. Wheresoever on this earth, whether among the snows of Piedmont’s valleys or in the fair fields of France, saints have died by sword or famine, or fire or massacre, for the testimony of Jesus, because they would not bear the mark of the beast either in their forehead or in their hand, this voice is heard sounding out of the third heavens, “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.”

It matters not, my brethren, where they die who die in the Lord. It may be that they have not the honour of martyrdom in man's esteem, but yet are witnesses for the Lord in poverty and pain. Here is the patience, and here also is the blessedness of the saints. Yonder poor girl lies in a garret, where the stars look between the tiles, and the moon gleams on the ragged hangings of the pallet where she bravely suffers and, without a murmur, gradually dissolves into death. However obscure and unknown she may be, she has been kept from the great transgression; tempted sorely, she has yet held fast her purity and her integrity; her prayers, unheard by others, have gone up before the Lord, and she dies in the Lord, saved through Jesus Christ. None will preach her funeral sermon, but she shall not miss that voice from heaven, saying, "Write, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord."

We repeat it, it matters not when you die nor in what condition; if you are in the Lord, and die in the Lord, right blessed are ye.

Now, it is quite certain that very soon every one of us must leave this world. We know that we are no more immortal than our fellow men. Though by a sad piece of imposition upon ourselves we count all men mortal but ourselves, right surely mortal we are, and pass away out of this world each one of us shall, in due time. The saints themselves must die, though to them death is far other than to sinners. It is greatly wise to be ready for our undressing, prepared for the sweet sleep in Jesus; and if we are not in Christ, it is all the more imperative upon us to consider our latter end, that we rush not forward in the dark. I therefore want, for a few minutes only, to disengage your mind from the too abundant snares of this world, and the thralldom of human cares, that you may look across the border into the great future so surely yours, perhaps so nearly yours. Oh, that you might be helped to prepare for that future, that by

such preparation, through divine grace, you may be numbered among the blessed who die in the Lord.

First, we shall briefly describe their character, then mention the rest which constitutes their blessedness, and conclude by meditating upon the reward, which is a further part of that blessedness.

I. First, then, let us describe THE CHARACTER. "Here is the patience of the saints." To be blessed when we die we must be saints. By nature we are sinners, and by grace we must become saints if we would enter heaven; for it is the land of saints, and none but saints can ever pass its frontiers. Since death does not change character, we must be made saints here below if we are to be saints above. We have come to misuse the term "saint," and apply it only to some few of God's people. What means it but this — holy? Holy men and holy women — these are saints. It is not Saint Peter and Saint John merely; you are a saint, dear brother, if you live unto the Lord; you are a saint, my sister, however obscure your name, if you keep the Lord's way, and walk before him in sincere obedience. We must be saints, and in order to be this we must be renewed in spirit, for we are sinners by nature; we must, in fact, be born again. All unholy and unclean, we are by nature nothing else but sin; and we must be created anew by the power of the eternal Spirit, or else holiness will never dwell in us. Our loves must be changed, so that we no longer love evil things, but delight only in that which is true, generous, kind, upright, pure, godlike. We must be changed in every faculty and power of our nature by that same hand which first made us, and across our brows must be written these words, "Holiness unto the Lord."

The word saint denotes not merely the pure in character, but those who are set apart unto God, dedicated ones, sanctified by being devoted to holy uses — by being, in fact, consecrated to God alone. My dear hearer, do you belong to God?

Do you live to glorify Jesus? Can you honestly put your hand on your heart, and say, "Yes, I belong to him who bought me with his blood, and I endeavour by his grace to live as he would have me live. I am devoted to his honour, loving my fellow-men and loving my Lord, endeavouring to be like unto him in all things"? You must be such, for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

"But how am I to attain to holiness?" You cannot rise to it save by divine strength. The Holy Spirit is the Sanctifier. Jesus who is our justifier is also made unto us sanctification, and if we by faith lay hold on him, we shall find in him all that we want. Let this be a searching matter with every one here present, as I desire to make it with myself, and may God grant we may be numbered with the saints!

But the glorified are also described in our text as patient ones, — "Here is the patience of the saints," or, if you choose to render it differently, you may lawfully do so — "Here is the endurance of the saints." Those who are to be crowned in heaven must bear the cross on earth. "No cross, no crown," is still most true. Many would be saints if everybody would encourage them; but as soon as a hard word is spoken they are offended. They would go to heaven if they could travel there amidst the hosannas of the multitude, but when they hear the cry of "Crucify him, crucify him," straightway they desert the man of Nazareth, for they have no intention to share his cross, or to be despised and rejected of men. The true saints of God are prepared to endure scoffing, and jeering, and scorning; they accept this cross without murmuring, remembering him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself. They know that their brethren who went before "resisted unto blood, striving against sin," and as they have not yet come to that point, they count it foul scorn that they should be ashamed or confounded in minor trials, let their adversaries do what they

may. Those who are to sing Christ's praise in heaven must first have been willing to bear Christ's shame below. Numbered with him in the humiliation must they be, or they cannot expect to be partakers with him in the glory. And now, dear brethren and sisters, how is it with us? Are we willing to be reproached for Christ's glory? Can we bear the sarcasm of the wise? Can we bear the jest of the witty? Are we willing to be pointed at as Puritanic, punctilious and precise? Do we dare to be singular when to be singular is to be right? If we can do this by God's grace, let us further question ourselves. Could we endure this ordeal if its intensity were increased? Suppose it came to something worse — to the thumbscrew or the rack, could we then bear it? I sometimes fear that many professors would cut a sorry figure if persecuting times should come; for I observe that to be excluded from what is called "society" is a great grievance to many modern Christians. When they settle in any place, their enquiry is not, "Where can I hear the gospel best?" but "Which is the most fashionable place of worship?" And the question with regard to their children is not "Where will they have Christian associations?" but "How can I introduce them to society?" — introduction to society frequently being an introduction to temptation, and the commencement of a life of levity. Oh, that all Christians could scorn the soft witcheries of the world, for, if they cannot, they may be sure that they will not bear its fiery breath when, like an oven, persecution comes forth to try the saints. God grant us grace to have the patience of the saints; that patience of the saints which will cheerfully suffer loss rather than do a wrong thing in business; that patience of the saints which will pine in poverty sooner than yield a principle though a kingdom were at stake; that patience of the saints which dreads not being unfashionable if the right be reckoned so ; that patience of the saints which courts no man's smile, and fears no man's frown, but can endure all

things for Jesus' sake, and is resolved to do so. "Can you cleave to your Lord when the many turn aside? Can you witness that he hath the living word, and none upon earth beside?" Can you watch with him when all forsake him, and stand by him when he is the butt of ribald jest and scorn, and bear the sneer of science, falsely so called, and the politer sarcasm of those who say they "doubt," but mean that they utterly disbelieve? Blessed is that preacher who shall be true to Christ in these evil days. Blessed is that church-member who shall follow Christ's word through the mire and through the slough, o'er the hill and down the dale, caring nothing so that he can but be true to his Master. This must be our resolve. If we are to win the glory we must be faithful unto death. God make us so! "Here is the patience of the saints" — it cometh not by nature; it is the gift of the grace of God.

Farther on these saints are described as "they that keep the commandments of God." This expression is not intended for a moment to teach us that these people are saved by their own merits. They are saints to begin with, and in Christ to begin with, but they prove that they are in Christ by keeping the commandments of God. Let us search ourselves upon this matter. Brethren and sisters, we cannot hope to reach the end if we do not keep the way. No man is so unwise as to think that he would reach Bristol if he were to take the road to York. He knows that to get to a place he must follow the road which leads thither. There is a way of holiness in which the righteous walk, and this way of obedience to the Lord's commands must and will be trodden by all who truly believe in Jesus, and are justified by faith; for faith works obedience. A good tree brings forth good fruit. If there be no fruit of obedience to God's commands in you, or in me, we may rest assured that the root of genuine faith in Jesus Christ is not in us at all. In this age the keeping of Christ's commandments is thought to be of very little conse-

quence. It is dreadful to think how Christians in the matter of the law of God's house do not even pretend to follow Christ and his appointments. They join a church, and they go by the law of that church, though that church's rule may be clean contrary to the will of Christ; but they answer to everything, "That is our rule, you know." But then who has a right to make rules for you or for me, but Christ Jesus? He is the only legislator in the kingdom of God, and by his commands we ought to be guided. I should not, I could not, feel grieved if brethren arrived at contrary conclusions to mine, I being fallible myself; but I do feel grieved when I see brethren arrive at conclusions, not as the result of investigation, but simply by taking things just as they find them. Too many professors have a happy-go-lucky style of Christianity. Whichever happens to come first they follow. Their fathers and mothers were this or that, or they were brought up in such and such a connection, and that decides them; they do not pray, "Lord, show me what thou wouldst have me to do." Brethren, these things ought not so to be. Has not the Master said, "Whosoever shall break one of the least of these my commandments, and teach men so, the same shall be least in the kingdom of heaven"? I would not stand here to condemn my fellow Christians for a moment; in so doing I should condemn myself also, but I plead with you, if you do indeed believe in Jesus, be careful to observe all things whatsoever he hath commanded you, for he has said, "If ye abide in me, and my words, abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you;" and again, "If ye love me keep my commandments."

A worldlyling once said to a puritan, "When so many great make rents in their consciences, cannot you make just a little nick in yours, for peace sake?" "No," said he, "I must follow Christ fully." "Ah, well," you say, "these things are non-essential." Nothing is non-essential to complete obedience: it may be

non-essential to salvation, but it is selfishness to say, "I will do no more than I know to be absolutely necessary to my salvation." It is essential to a good servant to obey his master in all things, and it is essential for the healthiness of a Christian's soul that he should walk very carefully and prayerfully before the Lord, else otherwise he will miss the blessing of them of whom it is said, "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." To be blessed in death we must keep the commandments of God.

The next mark of the blessed dead is, that they kept "the faith of Jesus." This is another point upon which I would speak thunderbolts, if I could, for to keep the faith of Jesus is an undertaking much ridiculed now-a-days. "Doctrines!" says one, "we are tired of doctrines."

"For forms and creeds let graceless bigots fight,
He can't be wrong whose life is in the right."

The opinion is current that to be fluent and original is the main thing in preaching, and provided a man is a clever orator it is a proper thing to hear him. The Lord will wither with the breath of his nostrils that cleverness in any man which departs from the simplicity of the truth. There is a gospel, and "there is also another gospel which is not another, but there be some that trouble you." There is a yea yea, and there is a nay nay; and woe unto those whose preaching is yea and nay, for it shall not stand in the great day when the Lord shall try every man's work of what sort it is. Search ye, my brethren, and know what the gospel is, and when you do know it, hold it: hold it as with a hand of iron, and never relax your grasp. Grievous wolves have come in among us, wolves of another sort to what were wont to be in the churches, yet, verily, after the same fashion they come disguised in sheep's clothing. They use our very terms and phrases, meaning all the while something else; they take away the essentials and vitalities of the faith, and replace them with

their own inventions, which they brag of as being more consistent with modern thought and with the culture of this very advanced and enlightened age, which seems by degrees to be advancing, half of it to Paganism with the Ritualists, and the other half of it to Atheism with the Rationalists. From such advances may God save us! May we be enabled to keep the faith, and uphold the truth which we know, by which also we are saved. I, for one, cannot desert the grand doctrine of the atoning blood, the substitutionary work of Christ, and the truths which cluster around it. And why can I not desert these things? Because my life, my peace, my hope, hang upon them. I am a lost man if there be no substitutionary sacrifice, and I know it. If the Son of God did not die, "the just for the unjust, to bring us to God," I must be damned; and therefore all the instincts of my nature cling to the faith of Jesus. How can I give up that which has redeemed my soul, and given me joy and peace and a hope hereafter? I beseech you, do not waver in your belief, but keep the faith, lest ye be like some in old time, who "made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience," and were utterly cast away. Woe unto those who keep not the doctrines of the gospel, for in due time they forget its precepts also and become utterly reprobate. In departing from Christ men forsake their own mercies both for life and death. The blessed who die in the Lord are those who "keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus."

Notice, that these people continue faithful till they die. For it is said, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." Final perseverance is the crown of the Christian life. "Ye did run well; what did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" Vain is it to begin to build, we must crown the edifice or all men will deride us. Helmet and plume, armour and sword, are all assumed for nothing unless the warrior fights on till he has secured the victory.

Those who thus entered into rest, exercised themselves in labours for Christ. For it is said, "They rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." The idle Christian can have little hope of a reward; he who serves not his Master can scarcely expect that his Master will at the last gird himself and serve him. If I address any here who are not bringing forth fruit unto God, I can say no less than this, "Every tree that bringeth not forth fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." The rule is invariable. It must be so. If there be no works and no labours for Christ, no suffering or patient endurance, we lack the main evidence of being the people of God at all.

To close this description of character, these people who die in the Lord were in the Lord. That is the great point. They could not have died in the Lord if they had not lived in the Lord. But are we in the Lord? Is the Lord by faith in us? Dear hearer, are you resting upon Jesus Christ only? Is he all your salvation and all your desire? What is your reply to my enquiry? You are not perfect, but Jesus is. Are you hanging upon him as the vessel hangs upon the nail? You cannot expect to stand before God with acceptance in yourself, but are you "accepted in the beloved"? That is the question — "accepted in the beloved." Are you in Christ, and is Christ in you by real vital union, by a faith that is the gift of God and the work of the Holy Spirit in your soul? Answer, I charge you, for if you cannot answer these things before one of your own flesh and blood, how will you answer in your soul when the Lord himself shall come?

II. So much with regard to the character. And now a very few words with regard to THE BLESSEDNESS which is ascribed to those who die in the Lord. "They rest from their labours."

By this is meant that the saints in heaven rest from such labours as they performed here. No doubt they fulfil service in heaven. It would be an unhappy heaven in which there should be nothing for our activities to spend themselves upon. But such labours as we can do here, will not fall to our lot there. There we shall not teach the ignorant, or rebuke the erring, or comfort the desponding, or help the needy. There we cannot oppose the teacher of error, or do battle against the tempter of youth. There no little children can be gathered at our knee and trained for Jesus, no sick ones can be visited with the word of comfort, no backsliders led back, no young converts confirmed, no sinners converted. They rest from such labours as these in heaven.

They rest from their labours in the sense that they are no longer subject to the toil of labour. Whatever they do in heaven will yield them refreshment and never cause them weariness. As some birds are said to rest upon the wing, so do the saints find in holy activity their serenest repose. They serve him day and night in his temple, and therein they rest. Even as on earth by wearing our Lord's yoke we find rest unto our souls so in the perfect obedience of heaven complete repose is found.

They rest also from the woe of labour, for I find the word has been read by some "they rest from their wailing." The original is a word which signifies to beat, and hence, as applied to beating on the breast it indicates sorrow; but the beating may signify conflict with the world, or labour in any form. The sorrow of work for Jesus is over with all the blessed dead. Naught to that place approacheth their sweet peace to molest; they shall no more say that they are sick, neither shall adversity afflict them.

Their rest is perfect. I do not know whether the idea of rest is cheering to all of you, but to some of us whose work exceeds our strength it is full of pleasantness. Some have bright

thoughts of service hereafter, and I hope we all have, but to those who have more to do for Christ than the weary brain can endure, — the prospect of a bath in the ocean of rest is very pleasant.

They rest from their labours. To the servant of the Lord it is very sweet to think that when we reach our heavenly home we shall rest from the faults of our labours. We shall make no mistakes there, never use too strong language or mistaken words, nor err in spirit, nor fail through excess or want of zeal. We shall rest from all that which grieves us in the retrospect of our service. Our holy things up there will not need to be wept over, though now they are daily salted with our tears. We shall there rest from the discouragements of our labour. There no cold-hearted brethren will damp our ardour, or accuse us of evil motives; no desponding brethren will warn us that we are rash when our faith is strong, and obstinate when our confidence is firm. None will pluck us by the sleeve, and hold us back, when we would run the race with all our might. None will chide us because our way is different from theirs, and none will foretel disaster and defeat when we confidently know that God will give us the victory. We shall also rest from the disappointments of labour. Dear brother ministers, we shall not have to go home, and tell our Lord that none have believed our report. We shall not go to our beds sleepless because certain of our members are walking inconsistently, and others of them are backsliding, while those that we thought were converted have gone back again to the world. Here we must sow in tears: there we shall reap in joy. There we shall wear the crown, or rather cast it at the Master's feet; but here we must plunge deep into the sea to fetch up the pearls from the depths that they may be set in the diadem. Here we labour, there we shall enjoy the fruits of toil, where no blight or mildew can endanger the harvest.

It will be a sweet thing to get away to heaven, I am sure, to

rest from all contentions amongst our fellow Christians. One of the hardest parts of Christ's service is to follow peace, and to maintain truth at the same time. He is a wise chemist who can in due proportions blend the pure and the peaceable; he is no mean philosopher who can duly balance the duties of affection and faithfulness, and show us how to smite the sin and love the sinner — to denounce the error, and yet to cultivate affection for the brother who has fallen into it. We shall not encounter this difficulty in yon bright world of truth and love, for both we and our brethren shall be fully taught of the Lord in all things. We shall be free from the clouds and mists of doubt which now cover the earth, and clear of the demon spirits which seek to ruin men's souls beneath the shadow of deadly falsehood. Blessed be God for this prospect! It will be joy indeed to meet no one but a saint, to speak with none but those who use the language of Canaan, to commune with none but the sanctified. Truly blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, if they reach to such a rest as this.

*"To this our labouring souls aspire,
With ardent pangs of strong desire."
"Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O
Jerusalem."*

III. The last matter for our consideration is THE REWARD of the blessed dead: — "They rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." They do not go before them, they have a forerunner infinitely superior to their works, for Jesus and his finished work have led the way. "I go," says he, "to prepare a place for you." In effect he says to us, "Not your works, but mine; not your tears, but my blood; not your efforts, but my finished work shall lead the van." Where then do our works come? Do they march at our right hand or

our left as subjects of cheering contemplation? No, no, we dare not take them as companions to comfort us: they follow us at our heel; they keep behind us out of sight, and we ourselves in our desires after holiness always outmarch them. The Christian should always keep his best services behind, always going beyond them, and never setting them before his eyes as objects for congratulation. The preacher should labour to preach the best sermons possible, but he must never have them before him so as to cause him, in self-satisfaction, to say, "I have done well;" nor should he have them by his side, as if he rested in them, or leaned upon them, for this were to make antichrists of them. No, let them come behind: that is their proper place. Believers know where to put good works; they do not despise them, they never say a word to depreciate the law, or undervalue the graces of the Holy Spirit, but still they dare not put their holiest endeavours in the room of Christ. Jesus goes before, works follow after.

Note well, that the works are in existence and are mentioned: immortality and honour belong to them. The works of godly men are not insignificant or unimportant as some seem to think. They are not forgotten, they are not as the sere leaves of last year's summer; they are full of life, and bloom unfadingly; they follow the saints as they ascend to heaven, even as the silver trail follows in the wake of the vessel. I pictured just now a man burning at the stake; his enemies thought they had destroyed his work, but they only deepened its hold upon the age in which he suffered, and projected his influence into the effect for ages to come. They made a pile of his books, and as they blazed before his eyes they said, "There is an end of you and your heresies." Ah, what fools men have been! Truth is not vanquished with such weapons, nay, nor so much as wounded. Think of the case of Wycliffe, which I need not repeat to you. They threw his ashes into the brook, the brook carried them to

the river, and the river to the sea, till every wave bore its portion of the precious relics, just as the influence of his preaching has been felt on every shore. Persecutors concluded beyond all question that they had made an end of a good man's teaching when they had burned him, and thrown away his ashes, but they forgot that truth often gathers a more vigorous life from the death of the man who speaks it, and books once written have an immortality which laughs at fire. Thousands of infidel and heathen works have gone, so that not a copy is to be found: I hope they never may be unearthed from the salutary oblivion which -entombs them: but books written for the Master and his truth, though buried in obscurity are sure of a resurrection. Fifty years ago our old Puritan authors, yellow with age, and arrayed in dingy bindings, wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, destitute, afflicted, tormented, but they have been brought forth in new editions, every library is enriched with them, the most powerful religious thought is affected by their utterances, and will be till the end of time. You cannot kill a good man's work, nor a good woman's work either, though it be only the teaching of a few children in the Sunday-school. You do not know to whom you may be teaching Christ, but assuredly you are sowing seed which will blossom and flower in the far off ages. When Mrs. Wesley taught her sons, little did she think what they would become. You do not know who may be in your class, my young friend. You may have there a young Whitfield, and if the Lord enable you to lead him to Jesus, he will bring thousands to decision. Ay, at your breast, good woman, there may be hanging one whom God will make a burning and a shining light; and if you train that little one for Jesus your work will never be lost. No holy tear is forgotten, it is in God's bottle. No desire for another's good is wasted, God has heard it. A word spoken for Jesus, a mite cast into Christ's treasury, a gracious line written to a friend — all these are things

which shall last when yonder sun has blackened into a coal, and the moon has curdled into a clot of blood. Deeds done in the power of the Spirit are eternal. Therefore, "Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

Good works follow Christians, and they will be rewarded. The rewards of heaven will be all of grace; but there will be rewards. You cannot read the Scripture without perceiving that the Lord first gives us good works, and then in his grace rewards us for them. There is a "Well done, good and faithful servant," and there is a proportionate allotment of reward to the man who was faithful with five talents and the man who was faithful with two. You who live for Jesus, may be quite certain that your life will be recompensed in the world to come. I repeat it, the reward will not be of debt, but of grace, but a reward there will be. Oh, the joy of knowing, when you are gone, that the truth you preached is living still! Methinks the apostles since they have been in heaven must often have looked down on the world, and marvelled at the work which God helped twelve poor fishermen to do, and they must have felt a growing blessedness as they have seen nations converted by the truth which they preached in feebleness. What must be the joy of a pastor in glory to find his spiritual children coming in one by one! Methinks, if I may, I shall go down to the gate and linger there to look for some of you. Ay, not a few shall I welcome as my children there, blessed be the name of the Lord; but what a joy it will be! You, teachers — you my good sister, who have brought so many to Christ — I cannot but believe that it shall multiply your heaven to see your dear ones entering it. You will have a heaven in every one of those whose feet you guided thither, you will joy in their joy, and praise the Lord in their praise. No, no, the good old cause shall never die, and the truth shall never perish. As I have lately read many hard things that

have been spoken against the gospel, and as in going up and down throughout this land I have seen the nation wholly given to idolatry, I have felt something of the spirit of the Pole who wherever he wanders says to himself, "No, Poland, thou shalt never perish!" Despite the darkness and ill-savour of the times, the gospel nears its triumph. It can never perish. Great men may fall, great reputations may grow obscure, grand philosophies may be cast into the shade, monstrous infidelities may win popularity, and old superstitions may come back again to darken us; but thy cross, Emmanuel, thy pure and simple gospel, the faith our fathers loved and died for, must continue to be earth's brightest light — her day-star, till the day dawn and the shadows flee away. The vessel of the church can never be wrecked; she rocks and reels in the mad tempest, but she is sound from stem to stern, and her pilot steers her with a hand omnipotently wise. Her bow is in the wave, but see she divides the sea, and shakes off the mountainous billows, as a lion shakes the dew from his mane! Fiercer storms than those of the present have beat upon her, and yet she has kept her eye to the wind, and in the very teeth of hell's tremendous tempests she has ploughed her glorious way: and so she will till she reaches her appointed haven. The Lord liveth and the Lord reigneth, and Christ from the tree has gone to the throne — from Gethsemane and Golgotha up to the glory; and all power is given unto him in heaven and in earth. We have nothing to do but to go on preaching the gospel and baptising in his name, according to his bidding; and the day shall come when the might with the right and the truth shall be, and the right hand of Jesus with the iron rod shall break his adversaries, and reward his friends. The Lord own every one of us as being on his side; and if we are not on that side, oh, that we may speedily become so by repentance and faith! May the Lord turn us, and we shall be turned; for if "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord," depend upon it,

cursed are they that die out of Christ — ay, cursed with a curse, and their works shall follow them or go before them, unto judgment, to their condemnation. May infinite mercy save us from being howled at by our works in the next world, save us from being hunted down by the wolves of our past sins, risen from the dead; for, except we are forgiven, our transgressions will rise from the grave of forgetfulness, and gather around us, and tear us in pieces, and there shall be none to deliver.

May we fly even now to Jesus, and through faith in his blood be delivered from all evil that we also may have it said of us, “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.”

The Lord bless you for Christ’s sake.

Amen.

FORTY-ONE
THE ARK OF HIS COVENANT

SERMON GIVEN ON SEPTEMBER 25, 1881

SCRIPTURE: JEREMIAH 3:16, REVELATION

11:19

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 27

“And it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the laud, in those days, saith the Lord, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the Lord: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more.”

JEREMIAH 3:16.

THIS text speaks concerning the material ark. I should like to append to that another, which speaks of the ark spiritually, and tells us where its antitype is to be found.

*“And the temple of God was opened in heaven,
and there was seen in his temple the ark of
his testament (or covenant).”*

REVELATION 11:19.

When inward piety is low the externals of religion are frequently cried up. Those who know nothing of God are the very people to exclaim concerning themselves and their brethren, “The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these.” The Pharisees, who were furthest from God, were the most bitter advocates of ritualism and formalism; they would not even have a man healed on the Sabbath day, or allow the hungry to rub a few ears of corn out of the husks. It is not always so; but yet too often, “The nearer the church the further from God.” The more gown, the less grace. The more phylactery, the less sanctity. The more of ecclesiasticism, the less of true godliness. On the other hand, whenever the Spirit of God is largely poured out, although the ordinances of God are carefully attended to, yet as external things they are sure to be put into their proper place, and that proper place is a secondary one. The spiritual is put foremost and the ritualistic is placed hindmost when grace is largely given. It was so with David in the fifty-first Psalm: when he had made a hearty confession of his sin, and cried to God for mercy, he uttered those memorable words, “Thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offerings.” He puts aside the symbol because he has a clear view of the substance. That is exactly the case with the people mentioned in my text: they had been sadly sinful; but God in his mercy promised to turn to them, and to bless them, and bring them back into their own land again, and he says— “And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. And

it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith the Lord, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the Lord: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more.” The visible golden ark, which was so much their glory, should be quite forgotten, because of the gracious visitation of God. That shall be our subject this morning.

First, I shall invite your attention to the symbol revered; secondly, we shall see that reverence obliterated; and, thirdly, we shall dwell upon that reverence transferred; for though we no longer revere the ancient ark of shittim wood overlaid with pure gold, we do honour to that forever-enduring ark of which we read in our second text— “The temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his covenant.”

I. First, then, let us think upon THE SYMBOL REVERENCED.

The ark of the covenant was a small coffer not exceeding four feet and a-half in length by about two feet eight inches in breadth. It was made of an enduring kind of wood, and was covered with pure gold both within and without. Upon the upper part of it was a golden crown, into which fitted a solid slab of gold, which formed the lid of the ark. That golden lid was called the propitiatory or mercy-seat; in the Hebrew, Kapporeth, or a place of covering. Upon the two ends of this mercy-seat, and part and parcel of the same solid metal, were two cherubs, with outstretched wings. The Lord said of them, “And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be.” Between those wings, when God was

favourable to his people, the bright light, called the Shekinah, was wont to shine forth: and when, once in the year, the high priest went into the innermost place, bearing with him a cloud of incense and sprinkling the blood, he saw the glory of that light.

This ark was the object of great reverence, and very fitly so, because it symbolized God's presence, the presence of Jehovah, the living God, in the midst of his people. They saw no similitude, for what likeness can there be of him that filleth all in all? But they knew that God's excellent glory shone above the mercy-seat, and they thought of the ark in connection with the Lord, as David did, when he said, "Thou and the ark of thy strength." It was, therefore, a thing greatly to be revered, for God was there. To no other people had God given such a token of his presence. He walked in the midst of no other camp; but of Israel he had said, "My Spirit shall go with thee." It was the first article of the tabernacle concerning which Moses received instructions, for, indeed, it was the first in honour. Read the twenty-fifth chapter of Exodus, and see how speedily the Lord who gave the law provided a chest for its honourable preservation. Although Solomon made most of the furniture of the holy place anew he retained the same ark, which was too much esteemed to be changed. When it was carried abroad in the marchings of the Israelites it always went in front, and it was distinguished from all the other furniture by being covered externally with blue, as if to signify its heavenly character. Lifted high on men's shoulders, upon golden staves, the blue coloured wrapping of the ark was seen in the van of the Lord's host occupying the place of honour. We do not wonder, therefore, that it was much spoken of and esteemed by the tribes of Israel.

That presence of God meant Messing; for God was with his people in love to them. The Lord abides not with his

enemies, but with his chosen. So long as he gave the token of his presence it was a sign that he had not cast them off as hopeless. He still heard their prayers and granted them his favours; for he still remained in residence among them while his mercy-seat was in the holy place. When the ark went into the house of Obed-Edom for a time the Lord blessed the house of Obed-Edom for the sake of the ark of the Lord. Therefore David was encouraged to bring up the ark into his own city, and he did so with gladness, which he expressed by dancing before the Lord with all his might. Well, then, might the people speak of it, and think of it, and visit it, and magnify it, because it brought blessing to them.

The ark was held in reverence by the Israelites because it was their leader. When the time came to march through the wilderness the ark went in the forefront. How often did Moses cry, "Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered," and on they went across the pathless desert rightly led by this ark of the covenant. When they came to the brink of Jordan, as soon as the feet of the priests that bare the ark touched the waters, the river was parted, and they went through dry shod. It was so trusted in that they bore the ark on one occasion into the battle-field, when God was not with them, and the golden coffer was carried into captivity to vindicate its own honour among the Philistines, by smiting its captors with sore diseases, and breaking in pieces Dagon, their god. A wonderful ark it was when God was with it. It was such a symbol of power that we wonder not that when David brought it up to Mount Zion all the people shouted, and with sound of trumpet celebrated its triumphal march. It was also so much a symbol of holiness that Solomon removed Pharaoh's daughter out of the city of David, for he said, "My wife shall not dwell in the house of David, king of Israel, because the places are holy, whereunto the ark of the Lord hath come."

In Solomon's day the ark was finally installed in the temple, and the king placed over it two greater cherubim, ten cubits high, with outspread wings. These were made of olive wood overlaid with gold, and probably covered the entire structure of the coffer and the smaller cherubim, which were component parts of it. Then they drew out the staves of the ark, signifying that there the ark was to stay; but they left the ends of the staves visible, to show that God might yet depart from them if they sinned against him. In the temple the ark rested until the time of the captivity, and from that time it was no more heard of, and possibly never appeared again in the temple that was built by Zerubbabel or in that which was enlarged and beautified by Herod.

The ark was to the Israelites, after their wanderings were over, the fixed centre of their nationality, even as while they were in the wilderness it had always been placed in the centre of the camp. In the desert it had been the central kernel of the whole army. Outside the ark was the tabernacle or holy place, and outside of that, in various rows and orders, were the tents of the tribes; but the core of it all was this honoured ark. To-day we have a centre to which we rally, a fixed centre which faith perceives in heaven, whither the true ark of the covenant has gone up.

Marvel not that the men of Judah paid great reverence to this ark when in so many ways it was a token for good to them. What they did to this ark is mentioned in the text. First, they recognised it as the ark of the covenant of the Lord. They were wont to say, "The ark of the covenant of the Lord." They spoke much of it, and prided themselves upon the possession of it. Nay, they not only spoke of it, but they loved it; for we read, "Neither shall it come to mind," or as the margin has it, "Neither shall it come upon the heart." The ark of the covenant was upon the hearts of God's people; they had a deep affection for

it. When it was carried away captive we read of a godly woman who was seized with sudden travail at the news, while the aged Eli fell backward with horror at the tidings. It was very dear to the people of God, and if it was taken away they reckoned that the glory was departed from them.

Hence, in the next place, they remembered it, as the text plainly informs us. If they were captives they prayed in the direction in which the ark was situated; wherever they wandered they thought of God and of the coffer which represented his presence.

Next, they visited it. On certain holy days they came from Dan and from Beersheba, even from the utmost ends of their land, in joyful companies, singing from stage to stage, and making joyful holiday as they went up to the place where God did dwell between the cherubim. When they came back they rejoiced because they had worshipped before the ark of the covenant, even before the presence of the Most High God.

Visiting it, they were accustomed also to speak highly of it; for in the margin of your Bibles you will find, "Neither shall they magnify it any more." They used to tell to one another what the ark had done; the glory that shone forth from it, the acceptance of the offering whose blood was sprinkled upon it on the Day of Atonement, and the testimony which was heard from between the cherubic wings. They would tell how the ark divided the Jordan, how it laid the walls of Jericho level with the ground, how it slew the prying men of Bethshemesh and Uzzah, who laid presumptuous hands upon it, and how the glory of the Lord came upon it and filled the temple so that the priests could not stand to minister. Of their God and the ark of his strength they would not cease to sing; for the ark of the covenant was honoured in Israel.

II. Secondly, I would have you observe THAT REVERENCE OBLITERATED.

They were to say no more, "The ark of the covenant of the Lord." Yet that fact was to be a blessing. Observe that the words are not spoken as a threatening, but as a gracious promise. Now, this cannot merely mean that they would be without the ark; for they would certainly understand that to be a sign of divine anger. Neither would the mere absence of the ark fulfil the prophet's words; for if the ark were gone they would remember it still, and their hearts would hanker after it. If they could not visit it, yet it would come to their minds, and they would speak of it. It was somehow to be a boon to them that they should speak no more of the ark of the covenant, for the text was delivered in the form of a promise. The fact is they were to have done with the symbol because the substance would come. They were no more to speak of the ark itself, because they would have that which the ark was intended to foreshadow. Bear with me with great patience this morning while I try to interest you in the points in which our blessed Lord Jesus Christ is the ark of the covenant now in the temple of God for us.

Our Lord Jesus by his coming has put out of his people's thoughts the material ark of the covenant, because its meaning is fulfilled in him; and this, first, in the sense of preservation. The ark was intended to be a sacred treasury in which God laid up the two tables of stone upon which the law was written, that they might be kept there as priceless things, not to be commonly handled or even seen, but shut up there as the most precious gifts of heaven. We know not where the tablets are now, and we know not what has become of the golden chest; but where is the law now? Once it lay broken at your feet and mine, even as the tables were shattered at the feet of Moses. When Moses takes the tables of the law into his hand he soon

grows angry with the sinful people, and he breaks them to pieces at the foot of the mount. But where is the law now? In Christ, for "he is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth." "How I love thy law," says David. David knew where the law was, and where it could become an object of love, even in the hand of a mediator. The law apart from Christ is a terror to our guilty souls, because it is a law broken, and therefore condemning; but the law in Christ Jesus, honoured and fulfilled by him, is a delightful sight to true worshippers. In him the law is more honoured than by any merely human obedience, and it smiles upon us as if we had perfectly obeyed it. The law fulfilled is our confidence as much as the law violated was our dread. We think nothing of the ark now, and we think nothing of the tablets of stone; but we do think everything of Christ Jesus, "who is made of God unto us righteousness"; for he has completely kept the law; for he said, "Thy law is within my heart." It was not within his heart alone, but within all his life; his whole thoughts, words, and acts went to make up a golden chest in which the precious treasure of the perfect law of God should be contained. O come, let us magnify his blessed name!

Next, the ark signified propitiation; for over the top of the sacred box which held the two tables of the law was the slab of gold called the mercy-seat, which covered all. We will not talk of that golden covering now, but we will speak of Jesus, our blessed Lord, who covers all. When God looks down upon his law, he does not see it nakedly, but he beholds it in the person of his Son. He sees it there perfectly preserved without taint or flaw of any kind, and he rejoices therein. You and I magnify the Lord that instead of having a naked law to look at, which would flash devouring flame upon us, we see the law in Christ covered with mercy, fulfilled by love on our behalf. We often speak of the mercy-seat; but do we, so often as we should, remember that

Jesus Christ himself is that mercy-seat? There is no mercy-seat to which we can draw nigh in prayer except the Lord Jesus Christ himself, he is the propitiation for our sins, and through whom our supplications are accepted. "Ah," said the Jew, "we have a mercy-seat that covers all." "Ah," say we, "but we have one who does not do that typically, and in outward pattern alone, but he is the real covering upon which we lay our prayers and thanksgivings, and find ourselves accepted." We come not to God on the footing of the law, but the interposing propitiation covers all, and comes between, and upon that mercy-seat we offer our petitions and praises. That is a second blessed reason why we will say no more, "The ark of the covenant of the Lord," neither shall it come to mind, for Jesus is the propitiatory for us.

The next word is a very blessed one, and that is covenant. The ark was called "the ark of the covenant." It represented a covenant of works, as it was a part of a visible sanctuary; and, ah, how soon was that covenant broken! There is no wonder that in the breaking of that covenant the golden pot of manna was lost, and that Aaron's rod that budded was no more seen; for we are told in the Chronicles that when they opened the ark, in the days of Solomon, there was nothing found in it "save the two tables which Moses put therein at Horeb, when the Lord made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of Egypt." Paul tells us that they were there originally, and so it is probable that they were taken away by the Philistines. Ah, how soon we should lose the sweet things of God if we were under the covenant of works, and how soon we should miss the gentle sovereignty of his shepherd rod! I thank and bless God that in Christ Jesus we have a covenant of grace which can never fail, and never can be broken, and in him we have all that our souls desire: pot of manna and rod of Aaron, covenant provision and covenant rule we find in him. Dear

hearer, have you ever seen Christ as your covenant? It is not every believer that has seen him in that light. When we first come to Christ we look to him as our Saviour, and we are lightened, and a very blessed look it is. It may not be till years after that we come to understand that God has entered into covenant with us in Christ, that he will bless us, and sanctify us, and keep us to the end. But, mark you, while a knowledge of Christ as a Saviour gives you the bread of life, yet the “wines on the lees well refined” and the “fat things full of marrow” are unknown to you till you can spell that word “covenant.” Oh, how I wish some of the people of God understood it, and realized that there is established between God and us in the person of Christ Jesus a covenant ordered in all things and sure. May the Holy Ghost teach you this. God has pledged his honour for the salvation of his people, and he has sealed the covenant with the precious blood of Jesus, and therefore he will not turn away from it, but will keep it for his Son’s sake. Oh, blessed Jesus, we want no ark of the covenant; for thou art the covenant itself to us, and in thee we rejoice.

Fourthly: because this ark was the ark of the covenant of God it was from it that he was accustomed to reveal himself, and so it is called the “ark of testimony.” Jehovah often spoke from off the mercy-seat to his waiting people. His priests and prophets heard a voice coming forth from the thick darkness of the secret chamber wherein God dwelt, a voice from off the mercy-seat giving them promises of succour in their times of need. It was a great thing to possess what they called “the oracle.” No other people had a true oracle except these chosen ones of God; but now that its voice is silent we need not regret it, for we have another oracle. “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.” His Son is the testimony of the Father’s mind; “He that hath

seen me," saith he, "hath seen the Father." In all the world of nature, in all the realm of providence, in all the books of revelation, God is seen; but nowhere as he is seen in the person of Jesus Christ— Jesus, the Word, is the plainest revelation of God. His sacrifice is the heart of God writ out in readable characters. Jesus Christ is "the testimony." Come, then, beloved, let us rejoice in the faithful and true Witness. Some will say that they know God by study, others declare that they have found out God by reflection, and certain dream that they perceive him by imagination; but all their knowledge put together cannot equal their blessed testimony of God which he hath given us concerning himself in the manifestation of his incarnate, holy, obedient, suffering, dying, risen Son. We say no more, "the ark of the testimony," but we rejoice that God was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, and saw the Father in the Son.

We have only reached the middle of the subject now: this ark also signified enthronement; for the top of the ark was, so to speak, the throne of God. It was "the throne of the heavenly grace." There God reigned and dwelt; that is, typically. It was a throne to which petitioners came with their pleas to obtain favours at the hand of the great King. Where now is the visible throne of God? Ah, sirs, his holy place has been broken down, and he dwelleth not in temples made with hands, that is to say of this building. There is no visible throne of God upon the face of the earth now. Whereunto shall ye liken the throne of the Most High? We have heard of thrones of mighty kings adorned with gold, and ivory, and pearls, and gems, till they have shone like rainbows; but what would these trifles be to the God of the whole earth? If you would see the throne of God, behold the person of the Christ; for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. The Lord reigneth from the tree, from the cross: here is the kingdom of God set up in the

person of Christ Jesus among the sons of men. Oh what a blessing to have such a throne to come to—to Jesus himself who is the throne of the invisible God! We talk no longer of the ark, and of its gold, and of its crown, and of its golden lid, and of the winged cherubs; for the Lord Jesus is infinitely better than these. Oh, our beloved Lord and Master, thou dost chase away these shadows from our minds, for the very throne of God art thou!

Out of this grows the next idea, that as it was the place of God's enthronement, so it was the door of man's approach. Men never came nearer to God on earth typically than when they stood in the holy place close by the ark. Israel was nearest to God symbolically on that day when the atonement had been made and accepted, and her priest stood before the ark awe-stricken in the presence of God. You and I need not speak of the ark of the covenant; for we have a blessed way of approach. We do not come to Christ once in the year only, but every day in the year, and every hour of the day. He who came but once in the year came tremblingly. The Jews have a tradition that they put a cord about the foot of the High Priest, so that if he should die before the ark they might draw out his corpse; such was their servile fear of God. The tradition shows what was the trembling nature of that entrance within the veil: how different from the apostle's words, "Let us come boldly unto the throne of the heavenly grace." We are not afraid of being stricken with death there: we are full of reverence, but we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear. There is no approaching God except in Christ; but in Christ our approach to God may be as near as possible. Come nearer, nearer still: it is your fault that you do not come near enough. There is nothing to tremble at here,—come right up to God and speak with him as a man speaketh with his friend. I would leave others to worship as they find they can; but to me the prayers of our national church

are very beautiful, but, oh, how cold! What a long way off is God in the Liturgy! What word is there in it of childlike delight in God? Hence certain brethren who have been accustomed to that style of praying chide us for our boldness and familiarity in prayer. They think we are presumptuous in drawing so near to God. Brethren, we do not marvel at your judgment, nor complain of it. We would not condemn you for your distant prayers; but we cannot yield to your censure of our bolder approach, for we have in our bosoms a sense of acceptance and a spirit of adoption which will not let us speak with God otherwise than as his favoured children. We come boldly because we come through Jesus. Who is afraid of Jesus? Who shudders when drawing near to him? And if he be the mercy-seat to which we come, and the place where the Father meets us, we feel that he permits the holy familiarity, the humble freedom which is suggested to our hearts by the spirit of adoption.

I must go a step further—the ark was the place of gracious power. On the top of the mercy-seat stood cherubic figures, and, notwithstanding all that learned men may have said, I do not think that any idea is nearer the mark than that these cherubim were types of angelic power, and of all the powers of providence which God is pleased to use in the behalf of his people. Notice how frequently the Word associates angels with our Lord; for instance, when Jacob saw the ladder which reached to heaven, and God at the top of it, there were angels ascending and descending upon it. Cherubim were on all the curtains of the most holy place which enclosed the ark, and the ministry of angels is interwoven into the great covenant plan of salvation. “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” Consider, then, that the angels on the mercy-seat typify the power of God by which he will defend his people. Bight well did he defend them, for who could harm them when he was in the midst of

them? Yet we will not speak of the ark, neither will we remember it, neither will we visit it; for we see in Christ Jesus that all the power of God is on our side: he is "God with us," and if God be with us, who can be against us? Every angel is the servant of our covenant Head, and so the guardian of every member of Christ. As he might have summoned twelve legions of angels by one uplifted glance to heaven, so will he fill the mountain with horses of fire and chariots of fire whenever his people need such succour. The stars in their courses fight for the Saviour and for the saved ones: nothing shall by any means harm them. In heaven, and earth, and hell the warrant of the great King stands in full force, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm;" and this protection comes to us because we are preserved in Christ Jesus.

An eighth explanation, however, I must close with, so far as this second head is concerned. The ark was much revered by the Jews, because it was the centre of their nationality. Around the ark in the wilderness gathered all the tribes. The pillar of fire and cloud above the ark of the covenant was God's flaming standard marking the pavilion where the Lord of hosts abode. After they were settled in Canaan, it was the centre of the nation; thither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of our God. To-day we have no such sacred ark or chest, we have no palladium or central standard. There is a church which has a man they call infallible, who is her centre; and there are others who in their cravings after uniformity in the churches would, I have no doubt, soon create a second hierarchy, and bring forth by prodigious birth a second pope; but it is not so among us. God will not have it so; he will have no human centre; and our very divisions are overruled to prevent such a thing. But there is one centre to which all God's people gather; there is one name above every name, "of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." Find me a dozen

spiritual men, and, to describe their different modes of thought, one of them may be called a Baptist, another an Episcopalian, a third a Presbyterian, a fourth a Methodist, and so forth; but let them sit together and begin to talk of the things of God, and of the covenant of grace, and of the work of the Spirit in the soul, and of the preciousness of the blood of Jesus, and you will see that they are one. Though they talk with various brogues, their language is one. Even as men from Somersetshire, or Essex, or Yorkshire, all differ and yet all are Englishmen; so are Christians of various denominations one in the common language of the cross of Christ. They say that Christians ought to be one, and so we ought; but I go further, and assert that all who are in Christ are already one. When our Lord prayed, "That they all may be one," was he unheard? Was his prayer unavailing? I believe it was answered, and that to this day there is a vital union among all the people of God in every place, and though they sometimes try to conceal that unity, yet the love of Christ will out and will fuse them into one. Put two mere theologians together, and they will fight like Kilkenny cats; but bring two spiritual men together at the cross, and they will lie down like two lambs: they cannot help it, they must love each other in Christ. There is, there must be, an essential unity among those who are quickened by the Spirit: and I rejoice and glory that the name, the person, and the work of Jesus are at this hour the centre of Christendom. Talk not of the ark, neither visit it, neither let it come to mind; for the King himself is in the midst of us, "the standard-bearer among ten thousand."

III. Thirdly, let us see THIS REVERENCE TRANSFERRED.

Let us render to Jesus the honour which aforetime was offered to the ark. First: let us say that Jesus is our covenant. We are told, "They shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the

Lord.” People must talk, it is natural to them, they must say something— what else are their tongues for? Let us, then, say concerning Christ that he is the ark of the covenant of the Lord. Come, let us each one say it for himself— “Lord Jesus, I am in covenant with God through thee. Jesus, thou art my propitiation, by thee I approach unto the Father.” Recognize this truth for yourself, my brother, and it will be a grand day for you. When you have said it to yourself, say it to those about you. Say it to strangers, but especially say it to your own brethren. “They that feared the Lord spake often one to another,” and what better subject could they have than to say one to another, “Brother, what fellowship we have with God in Christ! What a covenant there is between us and him! Oh how sweetly doth Christ cover our sins! How blessedly doth he fulfil the law! How sweetly doth he bring us into fellowship with angels, and how doth he enable God to shine forth upon us!” Say this, say it often, nobody will rebuke you; it is a subject upon which you may be as fluent as you please. When you have said all you know, say it over again, and when you have said it again, say it a third time. This is a kind of note of which the human ear, when once it is cleansed, never grows weary.

The text takes you a step further; for it says of the original ark, “neither shall it come to mind,” or (I give the margin), “neither shall it come upon your heart.” Brethren, let Christ come upon your heart, and dwell there. Beloved, let us not have Christ in the head, but Christ in the heart. Know all you can about him; but love him on account of everything you know; for everything we learn about Christ ought to be another argument for affection to him. How I loved him when I only knew myself a sinner and Christ a Saviour; but oh, I love him more as I begin to see my greater need and his greater fulness; as I see my greater sinfulness and his greater graciousness! Oh for a great Christ! Oh to see him grow upon us. Oh to get more knowl-

edge, and then to have our hearts enlarged that we may love him more and more! Carry Christ in your heart, even as the Israelite bore the ark in his affections. Oh love the Lord, all ye his saints! You can love other things too much; but not your Lord. Embrace him; cry in the language of 'the Song, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth." Outsiders do not understand the Song: they say it is a mere love ditty. They never will understand it till the Lord Jesus is laid on their hearts; but when he is once there— their joy, their all— they will need just such golden speech as Solomon's Song, and every word of it will be dear to their souls. Let us, then, love our Lord with all our hearts.

And, next, if we should ever grow dull or cold at any time, let us take the third step in the text, and let us remember the Lord.

*"What peaceful hours I once enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still."*

If I have not this enjoyment now, I will remember it, and struggle till I find my Lord again. O my Lord, I will remember thee. If I forget thee, let my heart forget to beat.

*"Gethsemane, can I forget?
Or there Thy conflict see,
Thine agony and bloody sweat,
And not remember Thee!
"When to the cross I turn mine eyes,
And rest on Calvary,
O Lamb of God! my sacrifice!
I must remember Thee.
"Remember thee, and all thy pains,
And all thy love to me;*

*Yea, while a breath, a pulse remains,
Will I remember thee."*

O memory, leave no other name than that of Jesus recorded upon thy tablets. Let us sometimes set apart a little space for the exercise of our memory. It is good for children at school to have their memories trained. Should not we sometimes, especially we who speak so much, get quite alone and sanctify our memory by going over all the blessings of the covenant which come to us by Christ, all the glory of his person, and all the wonders of his work. Oh, yes, we must remember it!

The next thing is, let us visit him. We cannot set out on journeys now to go to Jerusalem on foot,— little bands of us together; yet let us visit Jesus. Let us continually come to the mercy-seat alone. Who that knows the worth of prayer but wishes to be often there? Next, let us come up by twos and threes. You that live at home and seldom get out, could you not every now and then during the day say to your maid, if she is a Christian, or to your sister who lives with you, "Come, let us have a five minutes' visit to the ark of the covenant; let us go to the Lord and speak with him; may be he will speak with us. Perhaps we have not been agreeing as we should together, let us go and hear what God the Lord will speak, for he may speak peace to us, in more senses than one. Perhaps we have had a trouble to-day, and we do not see our way— let us go up to the ark of the covenant and hear what the oracle will tell us. Peradventure the Lord will say, 'This is the way, walk ye in it,' and we shall know what to do." Frequently in twos and threes visit Christ your ark, and take care also to join the great caravans of church prayer. One starts in this place every Sunday at seven o'clock in the morning, and another at the hour of ten. Join those bands of pilgrims. A still larger company goes up to the oracle on Monday nights at seven o'clock. Some twelve or

fifteen hundred of us are usually to be found in happy fellowship going up to the mercy-seat on Mondays. A very blessed little company meet on Thursday nights before I begin my sermon, and they say, "Come and let us go and enquire of the Lord, and ask his blessing upon his servant." Besides these, there are meetings for prayer in this place at so many hours that I cannot now mention them all. If you live where they are giving up prayer-meetings, carry home a live coal and drop it into your minister's bosom. "Ah," say you, "he might not like it." That is very likely, but he certainly needs setting on fire if he lets the prayer-meeting go out. Churches without prayer-meetings! Pull them down, their day is over! Stop the preacher's mouth if he does not pray, and let his church be scattered to the winds; for the church that forgets to assemble for prayer has "Ichabod" written on its walls. No prayer, no power. The ark of the covenant is gone when the people no longer come together to cry unto the Lord in their companies. Let us visit the ark, then, constantly together; let us go up to the Holy Place that we may speak with the Most High!

The last thing is, "Neither shall that be done any more"; but the margin has it, "Neither shall that be magnified any more." Transfer your reverence, then, and as you cannot magnify the literal mercy-seat, come and magnify Christ, who is the real mercy-seat. Oh, that I knew how to speak words worthy to lie under the soles of my Master's feet! Oh, that I could speak a sentence that was fit to be laid in the road like the palm branches, with which the disciples strewed his way, not worthy to be touched by his feet, but by the feet of the beast that he rode upon! I am not worthy to unloose his shoe latchet. He is so glorious that archangels fall on their faces to adore him. Heaven is splendid, but the splendour of heaven is the presence of my Lord and Master. His throne is a glorious high throne, but it owes its glory and its height to him that sits upon

it. Hallelujah unto thee, O Christ. Hallelujah for ever and ever! for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood! If the Jew was ever permitted to look upon the golden chest of the ark, he saw but little compared with what I see in thee, thou man, thou God! The wood that could not rot, covered over with precious gold, was a poor representation of his perfect manhood and glorious Godhead. The ark was crowned, but we see Jesus made a little lower than the angels, and crowned King of kings and Lord of lords. Again my heart cries hallelujah! The Jew could but see a slab of gold that was called the throne of God, but we see the spotless, perfect life, and infinitely precious atonement of Christ, which are better than the much fine gold. I see God, not as a light for the eyes, but as shining upon the soul in Jesus my Lord. Oh, the glory, the glory of that light! I am reconciled! I am a child of God! I am brought near! Jehovah speaks to me! I speak to him! Hallelujah! All praise to him through whom such fellowship is rendered possible, so that a man can see God and live! Glory, glory be unto him who is now in the temple above. The veil is rent, and faith can see Jesus, to whom we come this day. God bless you, beloved.

Amen.

REVELATION 12

FORTY-TWO
THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB, THE
CONQUERING WEAPON

SERMON GIVEN ON SEPTEMBER 9, 1888

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 12:11

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 34

*“And they overcame him by the blood of the
Lamb, and by the word of their testimony;
and they loved not their lives unto the
death.”*

REVELATION 12:11.

WHEREVER evil appears, it is to be fought with by the children of God in the name of Jesus, and in the power of the Holy Ghost. When evil appeared in an angel, straightway there was war in heaven. Evil in mortal men is to be striven against by all regenerate men. If sin comes to us in the form of an angel of light we must still war with it. If it comes with all manner of

deceivableness of unrighteousness, we must not parley for a single moment, but begin the battle forthwith, if indeed we belong to the armies of the Lord. Evil is at its very worst in Satan himself: with him we fight. He is no mean adversary. The evil spirits which are under his control are, any one of them, terrible foes; but when Satan himself personally attacks a Christian, any one of us will be hard put to it.

When this dragon blocks our road, we shall need heavenly aid to force our passage. A pitched battle with Apollyon may not often occur; but when it does, you will know it painfully: you will record it in your diary as one of the darkest days you have ever lived; and you will eternally praise your God, when you overcome him. But even if Satan were ten times stronger and more crafty than he is, we are bound to wrestle with him: we cannot for a moment hesitate, or offer him terms. Evil in its highest, strongest, and proudest form is to be assailed by the soldier of the cross, and nothing must end the war but complete victory. Satan is the enemy, the enemy of enemies. That prayer of our Lord's, which we usually render, "Deliver us from evil," has the special significance of "Deliver us from the evil one"; because he is the chief embodiment of evil, and in him evil is intensified, and has come to its highest strength. That man had need have Omnipotence with him who hopes to overcome the enemy of God and man. He would destroy all godly ones if he could; and though he cannot, such is his inveterate hate, that he worries those whom he cannot devour with a malicious eagerness.

In this chapter the devil is called the "great red dragon." He is great in capacity, intelligence, energy, and experience. Whether or not he was the chief of all angels before he fell I do not know. Some have thought that he was such, and that when he heard that a man was to sit upon the throne of God, out of

very jealousy he rebelled against the Most High. This also is conjecture. But we do know that he was and is an exceedingly great spirit as compared with us. He is a being great in evil: the prince of darkness, having the power of death. He shows his malice against the saints by accusing the brethren day and night before God. In the prophets we have the record of Satan standing to accuse Joshua the servant of God. Satan also accused Job of serving God from mercenary motives: "Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and all that he hath?"

This ever active enemy desires to tempt as well as accuse: he would have us, and sift us as wheat. In calling him the dragon, the Holy Spirit seems to hint at his mysterious power and character. To us a spirit such as he is must ever be a mystery in his being and working. Satan is a mysterious personage though he is not a mythical one. We can never doubt his existence if we have once come into conflict with him; yet he is to us all the more real because so mysterious. If he were flesh and blood it would be far easier to contend with him; but to fight with this spiritual wickedness in high places is a terrible task. As a dragon he is full of cunning and ferocity. In him force is allied with craft; and if he cannot achieve his purpose at once by power, he waits his time. He deludes, he deceives; in fact, he is said to deceive the whole world. What a power of deception must reside in him, when under his influence the third part of the stars of heaven are made to fall, and myriads of men in all ages have worshipped demons and idols! He has steeped the minds of men in delusion, so that they cannot see that they should worship none but God, their Maker. He is styled "the old serpent and this reminds us how practised he is in every evil art. He was a liar from the beginning, and the father of lies. After thousands of years of constant practice in deception he is much too cunning for us. If we think that we can match him by

craft we are grievous fools, for he knows vastly more than the wisest of mortals; and if it once comes to a game of policies, he will certainly clear the board, and sweep our tricks into the bag. To this cunning he adds great speed, so that he is quick to assail at any moment, darting down upon us like a hawk upon a poor chick. He is not everywhere present; but it is hard to say where he is not. He cannot be omnipresent; but yet, by that majestic craft of his, he so manages his armies of fallen ones that, like a great general, he superintends the whole field of battle, and seems present at every point. No door can shut him out, no height of piety can rise beyond his reach. He meets us in all our weaknesses, and assails us from every point of the compass. He comes upon us unawares, and gives us wounds which are not easily healed.

But yet, dear friends, powerful as this infernal spirit certainly must be, his power is defeated when we are resolved never to be at peace with him. We must never dream of terms or truce with evil. To suppose that we can let him alone, and all will be well, is a deadly error. We must fight or perish: evil will slay us if we do not slay it. Our only safety will lie in a determined, vigorous opposition to sin, whatever shape it assumes, whatever it may threaten, whatever it may promise. The Holy Ghost alone can maintain in us this enmity to sin.

According to the text it is said of the saints, "They overcame him." "We are never to rest until it is said of us also, "They overcame him." He is a foeman worthy of your steel. Do you refuse the conflict? Do you think of turning back? You have no armour for your back. To cease to fight is to be overcome. You have your choice between the two, either to gird up the loins of your minds for a life-long resistance, or else to be Satan's slaves for ever. I pray God that you may awake, arise, and give battle to the foe. Resolve once for all that by the grace

of God you will be numbered with those who overcome the arch-enemy.

Our text brings before us a very important subject for consideration:— What is the conquering weapon? With what sword did they fight who have overcome the great red dragon? Listen! “They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb.” Secondly, how do we use that weapon? We do as they did who overcame “by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

I. First, WHAT is THIS CONQUERING WEAPON? They overcame him by “the blood of the Lamb.”

The blood of the Lamb signifies, first, the death of the Son of God. The sufferings of Jesus Christ might be set forth by some other figure, but his death on the cross requires the mention of blood. Our Lord was not only bruised and smitten, but he was put to death. His heart’s blood was made to flow. He of whom we speak was God over all, blessed for ever; but he condescended to take our manhood into union with his Godhead in a mysterious manner. He was born at Bethlehem a babe, he grew as a child, he ripened into manhood, and lived here among us, eating and drinking, suffering and rejoicing, sleeping and labouring as men do. He died in very deed and of a truth, and was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathsea. That death was the grand fact which is set forth by the words “the blood of the Lamb.” We are to view Jesus as the Lamb of God’s passover: not merely separated from others, dedicated to be Israel’s memorial, and consecrated to divine service, but as the Lamb slain. Remember, that Christ viewed as living, and not as having died, is not a saving Christ. He himself saith, “I am he that liveth and was dead.” The moderns cry, “Why not preach more about his life, and less about his death?” I reply, Preach his life as much as you will, but never apart from his death; for it is by his blood that we are redeemed. “We preach

Christ.” Complete the sentence. “We preach Christ crucified,” says the apostle. Ah, yes! there is the point. It is the death of the Son of God which is the conquering weapon. Had he not poured forth his soul unto death, even to the death of the cross — had he not been numbered with the transgressors, and put to a death of shame — we should have had no weapon with which to overcome the dragon. prince. By “the blood of the Lamb” we understand the death of the Son of God. Hear it, O men! Because you have sinned, Jesus dies that you may be cleared from your sin. “He his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree,” and died that he might redeem us from all unrighteousness. The point is his death, and, paradoxically, this death is the vital point of the gospel. The death of Christ is the death of sin and the defeat of Satan, and hence it is the life of our hope, and the assurance of his victory. Because he poured out his soul unto the death, he divides the spoil with the strong.

Next, by “the blood of the Lamb” we understand our Lord’s death as a substitutionary sacrifice. Let us be very clear here. It is not said that they overcame the arch-enemy by the blood of Jesus, or the blood of Christ, but by the blood of the Lamb; and the words are expressly chosen because, under the figure of a lamb, we have set before us a sacrifice. The blood of Jesus Christ, shed because of his courage for the truth, or out of pure philanthropy, or out of self-denial, conveys no special gospel to men, and has no peculiar power about it. Truly it is an example worthy to beget martyrs; but it is not the way of salvation for guilty men. If you proclaim the death of the Son of God, but do not show that he died the just for the unjust to bring us to God, you have not preached the blood of the Lamb. You must make it known that “the chastisement of our peace was upon him,” and that “the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all,” or you have not declared the meaning of the blood of the Lamb. There is no overcoming sin without a substitutionary sacrifice. The

lamb under the old law was brought by the offender to make atonement for his offence, and in his place it was slain: this was the type of Christ taking the sinner's place, bearing the sinner's sin, and suffering in the sinner's stead, and thus vindicating the justice of God, and making it possible for him to be just and the justifier of him that believeth. I understand this to be the conquering weapon—the death of the Son of God set forth as the propitiation for sin. Sin must be punished: it is punished in Christ's death. Here is the hope of men.

Furthermore, I understand by the expression, "The blood of the Lamb," that our Lord's death was effective for the taking away of sin. When John the Baptist first pointed to Jesus, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Our Lord Jesus has actually taken away sin by his death. Beloved, we are sure that he had offered an acceptable and effectual propitiation when he said, "It is finished." Either he did put away sin, or he did not. If he did not, how will it ever be put away? If he did, then are believers clear. Altogether apart from anything that we do or are, our glorious Substitute took away our sin, as in the type the scapegoat carried the sin of Israel into the wilderness. In the case of all those for whom our Lord offered himself as a substitutionary sacrifice, the justice of God finds no hindrance to its fullest flow: it is consistent with justice that God should bless the redeemed. Near nineteen hundred years ago Jesus paid the dreadful debt of all his elect, and made a full atonement for the whole mass of the iniquities of them that shall believe in him, thereby removing the whole tremendous load, and casting it by one lift of his pierced hand into the depths of the sea. When Jesus died, an atonement was offered by him and accepted by the Lord God, so that before the high court of heaven there was a distinct removal of sin from the whole body of which Christ is the head. In the fulness of time each redeemed one individually accepts for himself the

great atonement by an act of personal faith, but the atonement itself was made long before. I believe this to be one of the edges of the conquering weapon. We are to preach that the Son of God has come in the flesh and died for human sin, and that in dying he did not only make it possible for God to forgive, but he secured forgiveness for all who are in him. He did not die to make men savable, but to save them. He came not that sin might be put aside at some future time, but to put it away there and then by the sacrifice of himself; for by his death he “finished transgressions, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness.” Believers may know that when Jesus died they were delivered from the claims of law, and when he rose again their justification was secured. The blood of the Lamb is a real price, which did effectually ransom. The blood of the Lamb is a real cleansing, which did really purge away sin. This we believe and declare; and by this sign we conquer. Christ crucified, Christ the sacrifice for sin, Christ the effectual redeemer of men, we will proclaim everywhere, and thus put to rout the powers of darkness.

II. I have shown you the sword; I now come, in the second place, to speak to the question, **How DO WE USE IT?** “They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb.”

When a man gets a sword, you cannot be quite certain how he will use it. A gentleman has purchased a very expensive sword with a golden hilt and an elaborate scabbard: he hangs it up in his hall, and exhibits it to his friends. Occasionally he draws it out from the sheath, and he says, “Feel how keen is the edge!” The precious blood of Jesus is not meant for us merely to admire and exhibit. We must not be content to talk about it, and extol it, and do nothing with it; but we are to use it in the great crusade against unholiness and unrighteousness, till it is said of us, “They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb.” This precious blood is to be used for overcoming, and conse-

quently for holy warfare. We dishonour it if we do not use it to that end. Some, I fear, use the precious blood of Christ only as a quietus to their consciences. They say to themselves, "He made atonement for sin, therefore let me take my rest." This is doing a grievous wrong to the great sacrifice. I grant you that the blood of Jesus does speak better things than that of Abel, and that it sweetly cries, "Peace! Peace!" within the troubled conscience; but that is not all that it does. A man who wants the blood of Jesus for nothing but the mean and selfish reason, that after having been forgiven through it he may say, "Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry: hear sermons, enjoy the hope of eternal felicity, and do nothing"—such a man blasphemes the precious blood, and makes it an unholy thing. We are to use the glorious mystery of atoning blood as our chief means of overcoming sin and Satan: its power is for holiness. See how the text puts it: "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb": these saints used the doctrine of atonement not as a pillow to rest their weariness, but as a weapon to subdue their sin. O my brothers, to some of us atonement by blood is our battle-axe and weapon of war, by which we conquer in our struggle for purity and godliness—a struggle in which we have continued now these many years. By the atoning blood we withstand corruption within and temptation without. This is that weapon which nothing can resist.

Let me show you your battle-field. Our first place of conflict is in the heavenlies, and the second is down below on earth.

First, then, you, my brothers and sisters who believe in the blood of Jesus, have to do battle with Satan in the heavenlies; and there you must overcome him "by the blood of the Lamb." "How?" say you. I will lead you into this subject. First, you are to regard Satan this day as being already literally and truly overcome through the death of the Lord Jesus. Satan is already

a vanquished enemy. By faith grasp your Lord's victory as your own, since he triumphed in your nature and on your behalf. The Lord Jesus Christ went up to Calvary, and there fought with the prince of darkness, utterly defeated him, and destroyed his power. He led captivity captive. He bruised the serpent's head. The victory was the victory of all who are in Christ. He is the representative seed of the woman, and you who are of that seed and are in Christ actually and experimentally, you then and there overcame the devil by the blood of the Lamb. Can you get a hold of this truth? Do you not know that you were circumcised in his circumcision, crucified on his cross, buried with him in baptism, and therein also risen with him in his resurrection? He is your federal head, and you being members of his body did in him what he did. Come, my soul, thou hast conquered Satan by thy Lord's victory. Wilt thou not be brave enough to fight a vanquished foe, and trample down the enemy whom thy Lord has already thrust down? Thou needest not be afraid, but say, "Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." We have overcome sin, death and hell in the person and work of our great Lord; and we should be greatly encouraged by that which has been already wrought in our name. Already we are more than conquerors through him that hath loved us. If Jesus had not overcome the enemy, certainly we never should have done so; but his personal triumph has secured ours. By faith we rise into the conquering place this day. In the heavenlies we triumph, as also in every place. We rejoice in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Michael of the angels, the Redeemer of men; for by him we see Satan cast out, and all the powers of evil hurled from their places of power and eminence.

This day I would have you overcome Satan in the heavenlies in another sense: you must overcome him as the accuser. At times you hear in your heart a voice arousing memory and star-

tlings conscience; a voice which seems in heaven to be a remembrance of your guilt. Hark to that deep, croaking voice, boding evil! Satan is urging before the throne of justice all your former sins. Can you hear him? He begins with your childish faults and your youthful follies. Truly a black memory. He does not let one of your wickednesses drop out. Things which you had forgotten he cunningly revives. He knows your secret sins, for he had a hand in most of them. He knows the resistance which you offered to the gospel, and the way in which you stifled conscience. He knows the sins of darkness, the sins of the bedchamber, the crimes of the inner chambers of imagery. Since you have been a Christian he has marked your wickedness, and asked, in fierce sarcastic tones, "Is this a child of God? Is this an heir of heaven?" He hopes to convict us of hypocrisy or of apostasy.

The foul fiend tells out the wanderings of our hearts, the deadness of our desires in prayer, the filthy thoughts that dropped into our minds when we have been at worship. Alas! we have to confess that we have even tolerated doubts as to eternal verities, and suspicions of the love and faithfulness of God. When the accuser is about his evil business, he does not have to look far for matter of accusation, nor for facts to support it. Do these accusations stagger you? Do you cry, "My God, how can I face thee? for all this is true, and the iniquities now brought to my remembrance are such as I cannot deny. I have violated thy law in a thousand ways, and I cannot justify myself." Now is your opportunity for overcoming through the blood of the Lamb. When the accuser has said his say, and aggravated all your transgressions, be not ashamed to step forward and say, "But I have an advocate as well as an accuser. O Jesus, my Saviour, speak for me!" When he speaks, what does he plead but his own blood? "For all these sins I have made atonement," says he, "all these iniquities were laid on me

in the day of the Lord's anger, and I have taken them away." Brethren, the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanseth us from all sin. Jesus has borne the penalty due to us: he has discharged for us upon the cross all our liabilities to the justice of God, and we are free for ever, because our surety suffered in our place. Where is the accuser now? That dragon voice is silenced by the blood of the Lamb. Nothing else can ever silence the accuser's cruel voice but the voice of the blood which tells of the infinite God accepting, in our behalf, the sacrifice which he himself supplied. Justice decrees that the sinful shall be clear, because the accepted substitute has borne his sin in his own body on the tree. Come, brother or sister, the next time thou hast to do with Satan as an accuser in the heavenly places, take care that thou defend thyself with no weapon but the atonement. All comfort drawn from inward feelings or outward works will fall short; but the bleeding wounds of Jesus will plead with full and overwhelming argument, and answer all. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Who, then, shall accuse the child of God? Every accuser shall be overcome by the invincible argument of the blood of the Lamb.

Still further, the believer will have need to overcome the enemy in the heavenly places in reference to access to God. It may happen that when we are most intent upon communing with God, the adversary hinders us. Our heart and our flesh cry out for God, the living God; but from one cause or another we are unable to draw nigh unto the throne. The heart is heavy, sin is rampant, care is harassing, and Satanic insinuation is busy. You seem shut out from God, and the enemy triumphs over you. You feel very near the world, and very near the flesh, and very near the devil: but you mourn your miserable distance

from God. You are like a child who cannot reach his father's door because a black dog barks at him from the door. What is the way of access? If the foul fiend will not move out of the way, can we force our passage? By what weapon can we drive away the adversary so as to come to God? Is it not written that we are made nigh by the blood? Is there not a new and living way consecrated for us? Have we not boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus? We are sure of God's love when we see that Christ died for us; we are sure of God's favour when we see how that atonement has removed our transgressions far from us. We perceive our liberty to come to the Father, and therefore we each one say—

*"I will approach thee—I will force
My way through obstacles to thee;
To thee for strength will have recourse,
To thee for consolation flee!"*

Pleading the propitiation made by the blood of the Lamb, we dare draw nigh to God. Behold, the evil spirit makes way before us. The sacred name of Jesus is one before which he flees. This will drive away his blasphemous suggestions and foul insinuations better than anything that you can invent. The dog of hell knows the dread name which makes him lie down: we must confront him with the authority, and specially with the atonement of the Lamb of God. He will rage and rave all the more if we send Moses to him; for he derives his power from our breaches of the law, and we cannot silence him unless we bring to him the great Lord who has kept the law, and made it honourable.

We next must overcome the enemy in prayer. Alas! we cannot always pray as we would. Do you never feel, when you are in prayer, as if something choked your utterance— and,

what is worse, deadened your heart? Instead of having wings as of an eagle to mount to heaven, a secret evil clips your wings, and you cannot rise. You say within yourself, "I have no faith, and I cannot expect to succeed with God without faith. I seem to have no love; or, if I have any, my heart lies asleep, and I cannot stir myself to plead with God. Oh, that I could come out of my closet, saying, 'VICI! YICI!'— 'I have overcome, I have overcome;' but, alas! instead thereof I groan in vain, and come away unrelieved. I have been half dead, cold, and stolid, and I cannot hope that I have prevailed with God in prayer." Whenever you are in this condition fly to the blood of the Lamb as your chief remedy. When you plead this master argument you will arouse yourself, and you will prevail with God. You will feel rest in pleading it, and a sweet assurance of success at the mercy-seat. Try the method at once. This is the way in which you should use this plea. Say, "My God, I am utterly unworthy, and I own it; but, I beseech thee, hear me for the honour of thy dear Son. By his agony and bloody sweat, by his cross and passion, by his precious death and burial, I beseech thee hear me! O Lord, let the blood of thine Only-begotten prevail with thee! Canst thou put aside his groans, his tears, his death, when they speak on my behalf?" If you can thus come to pleading terms with God upon this ground, you must and will prevail. Jesus must be heard in heaven. The voice of his blood is eloquent with God. If you plead the atoning sacrifice, you must overcome through the blood of the Lamb.

Thus have I spoken of overcoming in the heavenlies; but I shall have to show you how you must contend against the evil one in a lower sphere, even on this earth. You must first overcome in the heavenly places before the throne; and when you have been thus triumphant with God in prayer, you will have grace to go forth to service and to defeat evil among your fellow-men. How often have I personally found that the battle

must first be fought above! We must overcome in order to service. Many a score of times of late I should not have ventured into this pulpit had it not been for power at the mercy-seat. Those who know the burden of the Lord are often bowed down, and would not be able to bear up at all were it not for having in secret battled with their enemy and won the day. I have been bowed down before the Lord, and in his presence I have pleaded the precious blood as the reason for obtaining help, and the help has been given. Faith, having once made sure that Jesus is hers, helps herself out of the treasury of God to all that she needs. Satan would deny her, but in the power of the blood she takes possession of covenant blessings. You say to yourself, "I am weak, but in the Lord, my God, there is power: I take it to myself. I am hard and cold, but here is tenderness and warmth, and I appropriate it. It pleased the Father that in Jesus should all fulness dwell, and by virtue of his precious blood, I take out of that fulness what I need, and then with help thus obtained I meet the enemy and overcome him." Satan would hinder our getting supplies of grace wherewith to overcome him; but with the blood-mark on our foot we can go anywhere; with the blood-mark on our hand we dare take anything. Having access with confidence, we also take with freedom whatsoever we need, and thus we are provided against all necessities, and armed against all assaults through the atoning sacrifice. This is the fountain of supply, and the shield of security: this, indeed, is the channel through which we receive strength for victory.

We overcome the great enemy by laying hold upon the all-sufficiency of God, when we really feel the power of the precious blood of Christ. Thus, being victorious in the heavens, we come down to the pulpit or to the Sunday-school class made strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Having overcome Satan at the throne of grace, we see him like lightning

fall from heaven, even before our feeble instrumentality. We speak, and God speaks with us; we long for souls, and God's great heart is yearning with us. We importune men to come, and the Lord also pleads with them to come, so that they no longer resist. Spiritual power of a holy kind rests upon us to overcome the spiritual power of an evil kind which is exerted by Satan, the world, and the flesh. The Lord scatters the power of the enemy, and breaks the spell which holds men captive. Through the blood of the Lamb we become masters of the situation, and the weakest among us is able to work great wonders. Coming forth to the service of God in the power of our victory in heaven gained by pleading the blood of the Lamb, we march on conquering and to conquer, and no power of the enemy is able to stand against us.

It is time that I now showed you how this same fight is carried on on earth. Amongst men in these lower places of conflict saints overcome through the blood of the Lamb by their testimony to that blood. Every believer is to bear witness to the atoning sacrifice and its power to save. He is to tell out the doctrine; he is to emphasize it by earnest faith in it; and he is to support it and prove it by his experience of the effect of it. You cannot all speak from the pulpit, but you can all speak for Jesus as opportunity is given you. Our main business is to bear witness with the blood in the power of the Spirit. To this point we can all testify. You cannot go into all manner of deep doctrines or curious points, but you can tell to all those round about you' that "There is life in a look at the Crucified One." You can bear witness to the power of the blood of Jesus in your own soul. If you do this, you will overcome men in many ways. First, you will arouse them out of apathy. This age is more indifferent to true religion than almost any other. It is alive enough to error, but to the old faith it turns a deaf ear. Yet I have noticed persons captivated by the truth of substitu-

tion who would not listen to anything else. If any discourse can hold men, as the ancient mariner detained the wedding guest, it is the story of divine love, incarnate in the person of Jesus, bleeding and dying for guilty men. Try that story when attention flags. It has a fascination about it. The marvellous history of the Son of God, who loved his enemies, and died for them— this will arrest them. The history of the Holy One who stood in the sinners' place, and was in consequence put to shame, and agony, and death— this will touch them. The sight of the bleeding Saviour overcomes obduracy and carelessness.

The doctrine of the blood of the Lamb prevents or scatters error. I do not think that by reasoning we often confute error to any practical purpose. We may confute it rhetorically and doctrinally, but men still stick to it. But the doctrine of the precious blood, when it once gets into the heart, drives error out of it, and sets up the throne of truth. You cannot be clinging to an atoning sacrifice, and still delight in modern heresies. Those who deny inspiration are sure to get rid of the vicarious atonement, because it will not allow their errors. Let us go on proclaiming the doctrine of the great sacrifice, and this will kill the vipers of heresy. Let us uplift the cross, and never mind what other people say. Perhaps we have taken too much notice of them already. Let the dogs bark, it is their nature to. Go on preaching Christ crucified. God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ!

We also overcome men in this way, by softening rebellious hearts. Men stand out against the law of God, and defy the vengeance of God; but the love of God in Christ Jesus disarms them. The Holy Spirit causes men to yield through the softening influence of the cross. A bleeding Saviour makes men throw down their weapons of rebellion. "If he loves me so," they say, "I cannot do other than love him in return." We over-

come men's obduracy by the blood, shed for many for the remission of sins.

How wonderfully this same blood of the Lamb overcomes despair. Have you never seen a man shut up in the iron cage? It has been my painful duty to talk with several of such prisoners. I have seen the captive shake the iron bars, but he could not break them, or break from them. He has implored us to set him free by some means; but we have been powerless. Glory be to God, the blood is a universal solvent, and it has dissolved the iron-bars of despair, until the poor captive conscience has been able to escape. How sweet for the desponding to sing—

*"I do believe, I will believe,
That Jesus died for me"!*

Believing that, all doubts, and fears, and despairs, fly away, and the man is at ease.

There is nothing, indeed, dear friends, which the blood of the Lamb will not overcome; for see how it overcomes vice, and every form of sin. The world is foul with evil, like a stable which has long been the lair of filthy creatures. What can cleanse it? What but this matchless stream? Satan makes sin seem pleasurable, but the cross reveals its bitterness. If Jesus died because of sin, men begin to see that sin must be a murderous thing. Even when sin was but imputed to the Saviour, it made him pour out his soul unto death; it must, then, be a hideous evil to those who are actually and personally guilty of it. If God's rod made Christ sweat great drops of blood, what will his axe do when he executes the capital sentence upon impenitent men! Yes, we overcome the deadly sweetness and destructive pleasurable-ness of sin by the blood of the Lamb.

This blood overcomes the natural lethargy of men towards

obedience; it stimulates them to holiness. If anything can make a man holy it is a firm faith in the atoning sacrifice. When a man knows that Jesus died for him, he feels that he is not his own, but bought with a price, and therefore he must live unto him that died for him and rose again. In the atonement I see a motive equal to the greatest heroism; yes, a motive which will stimulate to perfect holiness. What manner of persons ought we to be for whom such a sacrifice has been presented! Now are we quickened into intensity of zeal and devotion. See, dear brothers, how to use the blood of the Lamb in this lower sphere while contending with evil among men.

But I must close with this. It is not merely by testimony that we use this potent truth. We must support that testimony by our zeal and energy. We need concentrated, consecrated energy; for it is written, "They loved not their lives unto the death." We shall not overcome Satan if we are fine gentlemen, fond of ease and honour. As long as Christian people must needs enjoy the world, the devil will suffer little at their hands. They that overcame the world in the old days were humble men and women, generally poor, always despised, who were never ashamed of Christ, who only lived to tell of his love, and died by tens of thousands rather than cease to bear testimony to the blood of the Lamb. They overcame by their heroism; their intense devotion to the cause secured the victory. Their lives to them were as nothing when compared with the honour of their Lord.

Brethren, if we are to win great victories we must have greater courage. Some of you hardly dare speak about the blood of Christ in any but the most godly company; and scarcely there. You are very retiring. You love yourselves too much to get into trouble through your religion. Surely you cannot be of that noble band that love not their own lives unto the death! Many dare not hold the old doctrine nowadays because they would be

thought narrow and bigoted, and this would be too galling. They call us old fools. It is very likely we are; but we are not ashamed to be fools for Christ's sake, and the truth's sake. We believe in the blood of the Lamb, despite the discoveries of science. We shall never give up the doctrine of atoning sacrifice to please modern culture. What little reputation we have is as dear to us as another man's character is to him; but we will cheerfully let it go in this struggle for the central truth of revelation. It will be sweet to be forgotten and lost sight of, or to be vilified and abused, if the old faith in the substitutionary sacrifice can be kept alive. This much we are resolved on, we will be true to our convictions concerning the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus; for if we give up this, what is there left? God will not do anything by us if we are false to the cross. He uses the men who spare not their reputations when these are called for in defence of truth. Oh to be at a white heat! Oh to flame with zeal for Jesus! O my brethren, hold you to the old faith, and say, "As for the respect of men, I can readily forfeit it; but as for the truth of God, that I can never give up." This is the day for men to be men; for, alas! the most are soft, molluscou creatures. Now we need backbones as well as heads. To believe the truth concerning the Lamb of God, and truly to believe it, this is the essential of an overcoming life. Oh for courage, constancy, fixedness, self-denial, willingness to be made nothing of for Christ! God give us to be faithful witnesses to the blood of the Lamb in the midst of this ungodly world!

As for those of you who are not saved, does not this subject give you a hint? Your hope lies in the blood of the Lamb.

*"Come, guilty souls, and flee away,
Like doves, to Jesus' wounds."*

The atoning sacrifice, which is our glory, is your salvation.

Trust in him whom God has set forth to be the propitiation for sin. Begin with this, and you are saved. Every good and holy thing which goes with salvation will follow after; but now, this morning, I pray you accept a present salvation through the blood of the Lamb. "He that believeth in him hath everlasting life."

FORTY-THREE
HOW THEY CONQUERED THE
DRAGON

SERMON GIVEN ON MAY 30, 1875

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 12:11

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 21

*"They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb,
and by the word of their testimony; and they
loved not their lives unto the death."*

REVELATION 12:11.

It is not my main object at this time to expound the chapter before us. I scarcely consider myself qualified to explain any part of the Book of Revelation, and none of the expositions I have ever seen entice me to attempt the task, for they are mostly occupied with a refutation of all the interpretations which have gone before, and each one seems to be very successful indeed in proving that all the rest know nothing at all about the matter. The sum total of substantial instruction in nearly all the

comments upon the Revelation amounts to this, that our heavenly Father has said in his word some mysterious things which few of his children can yet comprehend. This is just what we might have expected when the infinite God speaks to finite men, and it is no doubt intended to humble us and draw forth our reverent adoration. Happily there is a blessing to those who read and hear and keep the words of his prophecy, for had that blessing been confined to those who understand it, few would have obtained the benediction. The Revelation is a most blessed book, but its unfolding has yet to be accomplished. If you refer to the expositors you will find that they discover in this passage the dragon-ensign of pagan Rome, and its removal from its position by Constantine, who set up the cross in its stead. I do not believe the Lord took any more interest in Constantine than in any other sinner, and it seems to me little short of blasphemous to say that he was the man-child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron, and was caught up into God and to his throne. His adoption of Christianity as the state religion was not a thing for glorified spirits to rejoice in, but a dreadful calamity, fitted only to make sport for Pandemonium. No one ever did the church a worse turn than he who first joined her to the state. The act was a piece of state policy and kingcraft and no more, a business utterly unworthy of record by an inspired pen.

It would be unprofitable to follow great interpreters through the history of the Roman empire, all of which they find in the visions of John: such an exercise would be more suitable to another day, and would rather come under the head of history than theology. I can only give you what it occurs to me that you and I would have understood by the vision if it had been granted to us. It does not appear to me to be a portion of a consecutive revelation, but a sort of summary of the visions which follow it, and in some respects a preface to them.

Remember that it is a vision, and is not to be interpreted in cold blood word by word, or read as if its coherence and connection would always be apparent. In this chapter we may see, as in a panorama, the entire conflict between the principles of good and evil, between God and Satan. We have before us the old original quarrel between the woman and the serpent with which the inspired volume commences, and a clear development of the first promise, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed."

Woman in her innocence was attacked by "that old serpent, called the devil, and Satan," and she readily enough fell a prey to his deceptions, to the utter ruin of our race. At the end of that first crafty assault and speedy victory the dragon met with his rebuff in words like these: "The seed of the woman shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel"; a promise which declared that, though the woman's seed must suffer greatly at Satan's hand in consequence of sin, yet he would conquer in the end, and destroy the power of evil. In the Revelation the scene is changed from Eden to the heavens, and there before you stand again the woman and the serpent, in the same position of antagonism as before, the serpent still the assailant, only this time more openly so. Observe how both woman and serpent have developed; the one has become a queen bedecked with celestial splendor, and the other a python with tail so vast that he threatens to obliterate the stars with every sweep of it. The woman is no longer a simple, childlike personage, but a wonder; she walks not among the trees and the flowers, but amid the orbs of heaven. She is clothed with the sun, the moon is under her feet, and upon her head is a coronet of twelve stars. In her you see the great cause of truth and righteousness embodied—she is, in fact, the church of God in all ages, the woman whose seed blesses all the nations of the earth. The glorious cause of holiness and God, incarnated in the church, is

clothed with the splendor of light, and truth, and majesty. We will not stay to explain the details of the gorgeous imagery, for in such a matter it is almost frivolity to go into detail. The church has her greater and her lesser lights: she is covered with the underived splendor of indwelling Deity, and her walk is bright with the reflected glory of holiness, while her crown of joy is found in her complete ministry as represented by the apostolic twelve. She is fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners. Behold, then, the typical woman, and see how glorious is the cause of truth and holiness.

In the vision the queenly woman is about to bring forth the promised seed; she cries in her anguish, "travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered." This, of course, may represent the church crying day and night unto God in times gone by for the coming of the promised deliverer—a cry which increased in intensity and agony of desire as the time drew on; but it may also depict the constant condition of a true church, always travailing in birth till Christ be formed in the hearts of men, till the man-child, namely Christ mystical, be born here below till the Christ be so brought forth among the sons of men that he and all those who by grace are enabled to overcome the wicked one, shall rule the nations with a rod of iron. (Revelation 2:26-27.)

You see, then, in vision the woman, the church, and before her stands another wonder—the serpent mightily developed. He is called a great red dragon: huge in bulk and terrible in appearance is this emblem of evil, and he is clothed with the horrible splendor peculiar to himself—the splendor of deadly hate and imperious rebellion. Bright and burning, like flames of fire, the huge serpent is terrible to gaze upon. The python is red with wrath, and encrimsoned with persecuting malice. Red is the color of Edom, the adversary of the Lord, and of his Israel, and it is still the chosen color of the monstrous power of

antichrist, which holds its court at Rome. What is the last of its evil gifts to our own country but a red hat for its arch-priest? This great red dragon is full of craft, for it has seven heads. One Satanic head were enough, but our great enemy possesses an almost perfect ingenuity of wickedness, he uses a wisdom all but infinite to effect the overthrow of the church of God and the destruction of Christ and the rest of the heaven-born seed among men! These seven heads are supplemented by ten horns, the emblems of power, for the prince of the power of the air is by no means weak; he has, in fact, more power than wisdom, having but seven heads to ten horns, and yet since according to the order of nature each head should have two horns, we may also say that he has not power enough to execute all that his wicked cunning enables him to invent. By the power wielded by the dragon, he leads men to rebel against the law of the Lord, and induces them to persecute the church. The power of evil is great in all lands, and as opposed to a defenseless woman in a sorrowful condition, it seems quite impossible that she should stand against it. The heads are also crowned, for Satan sways with more than regal power the minds of men; he is the god of this world, it lieth in the wicked one. He delights to display that power, and trusts much to outward pomp, therefore he wears seven crowns upon his seven heads, as if one diadem were not sufficient to denote his kingship. His enormous energy is also set forth by his lashing the skies in his fury and tearing down a third part of the stars—it is evermore his ambition to deepen darkness and destroy light, and terribly successful has he been in this his choicest pastime.

See, then, before you the woman in her brightness and loveliness and the dragon in his rage and power. The dragon is watching for the expected birth, he is eager to devour the man-child as soon as it is born,—the ideal man, the offspring of the divine life he longs to destroy. It was so when our Lord Jesus

was born; Satan stirred up Herod to seek the young child, and hence the massacre of the innocents. But the dragon was foiled, Jesus lived till his hour was come, and then he was caught up unto God, and to his throne. Thus also Satan strove to devour the new-born seed, when the converts to Christ were few, and mystical body upon earth was like unto that of a little child. He persecuted the man-child when first the gospel was preached; but the more his servants persecuted the saints, the more they multiplied. The method followed by Pharaoh in Egypt was a crafty one, but it did not and could not succeed. Persecution always fails.

To-day, brethren, the man-child, even our Lord Jesus, is caught up unto God and sits upon his throne; and in part also the mystical body of Christ is there also, far beyond the reach of the dragon. Jesus reigns with his saints in a region in which there is no more place for the dragon, a domain from which he is for ever cast out into the earth. All the power which Satan ever had in heavenly things is now ended by the finished work of our ascended Lord.

*"Bruised is the serpent's head
Hell is vanquish'd, death is dead,
And to Christ gone up on high
Captive is captivity."*

By reason of our sin and his own power over death, Satan shut heaven against us, but now the battle in the higher regions between the dragon and the woman's seed is over, and we are in the heavenly places, and Satan banished for ever. There is no condemnation unto us any more, nor a foot for the evil one to stand upon, now that we are in Christ. When we read here "heaven," do not understand by it the place of the blessed, where God dwelleth, but the spiritual region, the realm of spir-

itual things. The first fight between truth and error lies in purely spiritual matters, in those heavenly places into which Christ has lifted up his church, it is a wrestling between good and evil spirits and not a contention with flesh and blood. We find angels first entering into this strife. We know but little about it, but it would seem that the great dragon of evil has made war with angels as well as with men. Milton sang of those angelic conflicts in majestic verse, but Milton was not inspired to speak infallibly, and we must take heed not to confound poets with prophets. It is clear that good and evil spirits are at necessary variance one with another, and it is also clear that in ages gone by Satan tempted the angelic band, and those angels which kept the first estate were victorious over him once for all; they rejected his sinful solicitations, and now he has no more power over them. Ever again can he tempt them, they shall stand fast for ever, confirmed in their blessed estate. Michael and his angels have defeated the devil and his angels in one decisive battle, and by remaining true to their allegiance have chased away from angelic realms the invading power of evil.

Dwelling in the spirit realms there are others besides angels, our brethren who have left the body, the saints of ancient times, and the faithful of the early church; these also dwell in a region out of which Satan is expelled, he cannot molest them any more. The text bids us hear the glorified chanting the song of victory over Satan, for ever cast down from the realms of the blessed never again to enter into the spiritual domain to vex them. "And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night." To the singers of this song I want to call your attention, and mainly to one point concerning them. They have

conquered Satan; I want you to observe this, and to note the weapons by which they overcame.

Leaving all the rest, we will pay our attention to the victors and the weapons by which they won the day. First, we shall notice that the blessed ones before the throne were all warriors and victors; secondly, they all fought with the same weapons; and thirdly, they all fought the same spirit.

I. First, ALL THE BLESSED ONES WHO ARE REJOICING IN HEAVEN WERE ONCE WARRIORS AND VICTORS HERE BELOW. It is a very simple truth to mention, but we need to be reminded of it.

*"Once they there mourning liege below,
And wet their couch with tears;
They wrestled hard, as we do now,
With sins and doubts and fears."*

We too often think of the saints that have gone before as if they were men of another race from ourselves, capable of nobler things, endowed with graces which we cannot reach, and adorned with holiness impossible to us. The medieval artists were wont to paint the saints with rings of glory about their heads, but indeed they had no such halos; their brows were furrowed with care even as ours, and their hair grew grey with grief. Their light was within, and we may have it; their glory was by grace, and the same grace is available for us. They were men of like passions with ourselves, "our brethren," though a little elder born. It is clear from our text that every one of the saints in heaven was assailed by Satan. How could there be a victory without a battle? They were all attacked by one or other of the dragon's heads and horns. When you suffer from a fearful temptation which almost staggers you, count it no strange thing; be not dismayed as though a new temptation had

befallen you. That fiery dart had been aimed at other men's hearts before it was caught upon your shield. If the insinuation should happen to be profane and blasphemous to a very high degree, so that you condemn yourself and say, "No other human mind could ever have been defiled with so foul a suggestion as this," do not despond, for such suggestions have been injected into the minds of the purest, even as the worst of thieves may seek to enter the house of the most honest man in the city. Even to those who at this moment are without fault before the throne of God it happened while here below that horrible temptations assailed them. Satan always has been since his fall a tempter of the worst order, and ever since he first beguiled our mother Eve he has gone on to ensnare men's souls with the same craft, the same cruelty, the same falsehood, the same impiety against the Lord. It will help you if you reflect that you are not alone, and the pathway which you follow was trodden by the most honored of the elect of God. Paul, who won provinces for Christ, nevertheless had his messengers of Satan to buffet him, and had to stand against doubts and scars insinuated by the old serpent, even as you must stand. If you could have examined the celestial victors one by one as they entered within the pearly you would have found them all covered with scars: though now they bear neither spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing, they had all of them in the day of their flesh to feel the cruel tooth and fang of that infernal serpent; not one of them traversed a clear course and took his throne unchallenged; neither will you conquer without conflict. For you also if there be no cross there will be no crown; therefore, be not astonished if you are attacked in all ways.

The glorified, in addition to having been attacked, were led to resist the evil one, for nobody overcomes an antagonist without fighting with him. There must be, in order to a real battle, two sides of the question, but I fear sue there are some

professors who know much about being tempted, but they do not know much about resisting. Now, brethren, however great our temptation, our resistance must be greater. To be tempted is common, even to the worst and most reprobate of men, but to resist temptation is the mark of the child of God. The verse I quoted just now says,

*"They wrestled hard, as we do now
With sins and doubts and fears."*

It is not merely that they had "sins and doubts and fears," these all may have, but they "wrestled hard" with them, they would not be put down by them, they would not yield an inch, they stood upon their guard until they drove the sword of the Spirit through the very heart of the foe. "They resisted unto blood, striving against sin." Rest assured, dear friends, that sin will never be conquered without resistance, and if we fold our arms and suppose that we shall get the victory by believing that we have got it, we shall be mightily mistaken. We must watch, and pray, and strive and agonise, and press forward; "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." Salvation is not by works, but conquest over sin involves fighting from day to day; victory will not come to us while we lie passive, but we must be stirred up with all the energy of the eternal Spirit to vanquish evil. These Canaanites must be driven out of the land by force of arms ere we can take full possession of our inheritance. Let this, then, be our pi dyer to our great Joshua as we gird on our harness and unsheathe our swords.

*"Almighty King of saints,
These tyrant lusts subdue;
Drive the old dragon from his throne,
And all his hellish crew."*

We find that these warriors all overcame, for heaven is not for those who fight merely, but for those who overcome. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things." "I do fight against my sin," says one. Brother, do you overcome it? Did it seem a hard question just now when I said, do you resist? It is a harder question which I now put, "Do you overcome?" For if sin overcomes you; if as an habitual matter of fact sin is your master, then you have yet to know what true religion is, for of the saints it is said, "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace." There is a groaning and a crying which is common to the saints. "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" is not an experience of an hour, never to be repeated; it runs more or less throughout the whole of life; but then remember that it is also attended with hopeful confidence in the power of divine grace, for the apostle goes on to say, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." The believer feels the battle, but he also rejoices in the victory. He wrestles and conquers at the same time. I wish that some of lay brethren could see how possible this is. We are victorious, though not without a conflict. Our victory is gained, and we are noose shall conquerors, but still we march on to new conflicts, and never lay aside our swords. The Christian's position is very like that of Napoleon, who used to say, "Conquest has made me what I am, and conquest must maintain me;" and so with you, Christian; you have conquered through Jesus Christ, but you have to conquer still, and go on as he did, "conquering and to conquer." All this by the power of the Holy Ghost. What if to-day I have been enabled by grace to overcome some one besetting sin, before an hour is over I may find another sin stirring within my bosom, and I must not yield to it; I am bound to conquer each temptation as it assails me. If I overcome Satan by the blood of the Lamb I am a Christian, but not else, for if any sin permanently overcomes me I can enter

heaven. If I overcome one sin by the power or the Holy Ghost I must still be looking out to wrestle with others, for between here and heaven I may never accept a truce, or hope for a cessation of hostilities. Never may the Christian take off his harness, never say to himself, "The battle is fought, and the victory is won, and I have nothing more to do." You are enlisted, brother, in a lifelong fight: when you shall lie down in your grave then may it be said, "The battle is over," but as long as you are here you will be within gunshot of the enemy, and it is just possible your sharpest conflict will be upon your dying bed, even as John Knox, after conquering the devil in all ways and shapes, waged as he lay a-dying the sternest struggle of his entire life. Even thus it may be with you, but you are bound to overcome. Attack, resistance, and victory must be yours.

So, then, in heaven they all rejoice because they have overcome, for the next verse to our text puts it, "Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them." It is a theme for gladness in heaven that they did fight and resist and overcome. Those white robes mean victories, so do those palms; but there could not have been victories if there had never been conflicts. There is joy among the angels, for they had their conflict when they stood firm against temptation, and did not swerve when the dragon's tail swept away a third part of the stars of heaven: but ours will be a victory peculiarly sweet, a song especially melodious, because our battle has been peculiarly severe. We fell, we rose again, we were kept, upheld, sustained, and enabled to overcome at last, and therefore will we rejoice for ever before the throne of God.

I leave this point, but I would like you to make the personal application—Are you resisting? are you conquering? Does the life of God in you get the upper hand of sin? Do not let us deceive ourselves. If sin is our master we shall perish; grace must reign in us, or we are in a wretched condition. Do not let

us look upon victory over sin as a luxury to be enjoyed by the higher-life—it is a condition into which we must all enter, or we are not saved. Holiness is not a luxury for the few, it is a necessity for all saints; and what is preached as an accomplishment which may be obtained by a second conversion is in truth a necessary part of the first conversion, if it be of the Lord. The slaves of sin are not the children of God. If sin reigns in your mortal bodies, you are dead in it. If Satan has dominion over won, you are not in Christ Jesus, for "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." Wherever grace lives it either reigns or fights for the throne; it enters the soul on purpose to war with evil and overthrow it. Where the ark of the Lord is Dagon must fall upon his face and be broken. "He that sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him," says the apostle John, and he saith truly. "That which is born of God overcometh the world," and if you let the world get the mastery you cannot be born of God. Thus I leave the point, hoeing that we may endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, and receive a crown of life at the last.

II. Now, secondly, **THE VICTORS ALL FOUGHT WITH THE SAME WEAPONS.** They had two weapons, and these two were one, the blood and the word. "They overcame him through the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony." First, the blood of the Lamb: it was theirs. The blood of the Lamb will not help us until it becomes our own. They went to Jesus by faith and received the atonement, the cleansing blood was sprinkled on them, it spoke peace in their consciences, it took away their sin, they were washed in it, they were made white as the driven snow. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." They were afar off, and "They were made nigh by the blood of Christ"; this blood continued to give them access to God, for it gave them boldness to draw near unto the throne of grace. In fact, this blood was so

theirs, that it was the life of their spirit; it was a generous wine to them, and became the highest joy of their souls. Brethren, if you and I are ever to be amongst these victors, the blood must be our own, appropriated by faith. How is it with you this morning? Has the blood cleansed thee, my brother? Does the blood dwell in thee as thy life? Has the blood of the Lamb given thee fellowship with God and brought thee near? If so, thou art on the way to overcoming by the blood.

The blood of the Lamb, according to the verse which precedes the text, had given them all they needed, for it gave them salvation. They were saved, completely saved. Jesus Christ, when they laid hold upon him and felt the power of his blood, redeemed them from all iniquity, and translated them from the kingdom of Satan. Then they received strength: note that word. They had been dead, but they obtained life; they had been weak, and they were made strong in the Lord, for he who knows the power of the blood of Jesus is made strong to do great exploits. Then they obtained the kingdom, for the kingdom comes to us by the way of the conquering blood of Jesus, and he hath made us kings and priests unto God because he was slain. We are told, also, that they had power, or authority. Our Lord, who has risen from the dead, clothed all his disciples with authority when he said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth, go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them." Beloved, if we have participated in the blood of Jesus Christ, I hope we feel it to be all these four things to us—salvation from sin, strength out of weakness, a kingdom in fellowship with Christ, and authority to speak in his name. It is the blood of the covenant, and it secures all the covenant gifts of God to us. It is the life of our life, the all in all of all that we possess. So, then, they had the blood of the Lamb, and they possessed the privileges which the blood brings with it.

But the gist of the text lies in the fact that they fought with

the dragon by means of the blood of the Lamb, and overcame with it. How did they do that? It is easy to discover. They overcame Satan's terrors with the blood of atonement. Satan is the great red dragon, a hideous seven-headed python, horrible to look upon, horned, like the serpent called the Egyptian Cerastes. Man dreads the serpent race, and would dread most a monster so dire as this, so full of poison, so red with fury. The conflict appears to be unequal enough between this horrid monstrosity and the seed of a timid woman. Yet when we are sprinkled with the blood of Jesus we are invulnerable, and fear not the dragon, for we remember the promise which saith, "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and the adder." When the atonement brings peace to our hearts, the great dragon dwindles down to a mere snake with a broken head, of which it is written, "Upon thy belly thou shalt go and dust shalt thou eat." We can see the heel mark of Christ upon his broken head, and what is more we expect to set our own heel there, for we are told that the Lord will bruise Satan under our foot shortly. I reckon upon the tune when the Lord will bruise him under my foot, it shall be as heavy a bruise as I can give him, I warrant you. He has tempted and tried us all so much, that the victory we shall gain will be one which will bring to Jesus much renown, and we will not fail to sing his praises as long as we have any being. Thus our fear of Satan ceases when we see that Christ has redeemed us from the curse, and put Satan as an enemy under our feet. Our hearts exult in thy presence, O destroyer of the devil and his works, and we triumph in thee.

*"When we behold death, hell, and sin,
Vanquish'd by that dear blood of thine,
And see the man that groaned and died
Sit glorious by his Father's side."*

By the blood of the Lamb we overcome Satan as the accuser of the brethren. The chapter expressly tells us that he accuses the brethren day and night; and there is an instructive tradition among the Jews that Satan accuses the elect of God all day and all night long, except on the day of atonement, and then he is quiet. Glory be to the dying Lamb, the atonement shuts the mouth of the lion continually, for the atonement lasts all the year round. Neither in the court of Heaven, nor in the court of conscience, can the enemy's accusations harm us, for the blood of our Substitute is a bar to all suits against us. If we by faith are assured that Jesus has put away our sin, what cause have we for alarm? If the punishment due to our sin, and the sin itself have both been carried away by our great Surety, so that sin is plunged into the depths of the sea, and cast behind God's back, then who is he that shall harm us? Brethren, do but grasp the doctrine of the atonement, and know your own interest in it, and the accuser of the brethren will be silenced by the voice of the blood.

We overcome Satan by the same means as to his craft. He has seven heads, but we tell him Jesus died, and that breaks all the seven heads, and destroys the sevenfold ingenuity of his snares. He would, if it were possible, deceive even the very elect, but the secret of the sprinkled blood is that which prevents the elect from ever being deluded by him. Who shall separate them from the love of Christ? Does not redemption by blood hold them fast to their Redeemer? You cannot be right anywhere if you are wrong upon the atonement, but if you are sound upon the substitutionary sacrifice there is little fear of your falling into any serious error. As the needle once magnetized continues to seek the pole, so they who are once touched with the love of their dying Surety are sure to remember it and cannot long be turned in any other direction. As for the dragon's horns of power, the power of the blood is far greater. Since

we have been redeemed by Christ from under the power of Satan he cannot regain his hold of us. His power is broken. As to the crowns which he wears, what care we for them? We are delivered from under his power by being redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, and Satan can never again have the rule over us. As for the energetic influence which is figured by his tail, he may quench the very stars of heaven, and pull down the most brilliant professors and make them fall to the earth as apostates, but he cannot harm us, for because of the blood of Jesus we are latest by the power of God through faith unto salvation. Cling to the cross, dear brethren, for there you are out of the reach of the old serpent's venom; he may hiss, but he can do no more. No wave can ever wash a poor sinner off from the rock of ages, no storm can drive a penitent out of the clefts of the rock. Within the wounds of Jesus we are secure from all the rage of Satan. In our battles with Satan we need no other artillery but the atoning blood, it meets and conquers him at all points.

The other weapon is for use in spreading the gospel and defeating the devil in his power over our fellow-men. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony. Now, brethren, what is the testimony of the saints? It is a testimony concerning the blood of the Lamb. If ever we are to conquer Satan in the world, we must preach the atoning blood. Whenever the doctrine of the atonement has been obscured in the church in any measure, to that extent the power of the church has declined, but you shall find that whether there is a clear declaration of justification by faith in Jesus Christ, then the church comes forth in her glory, and bruises the dragon's head. Dear brethren, if you want to deliver souls from the power of Satan, you must preach the sacrifice of Jesus and its power to remove sin. Does Satan cast about men the chains of drunkenness, or uncleanness, or self-right-

eousness, preach the blood of Jesus is the only way of salvation, let them see how sin was punished in him, and how ready the Lord is to forgive them, and they will arise and go unto their Father. Tell the sinner that God is able to put away his sin, because Jesus died, and, touched with repentance, through the teaching of the Holy Spirit, you will find the sinner break loose from dominion of the devil. If you find that same sinner trembling with despair, accused in his conscience, alarmed as at a great red dragon, you may cheer him by the old, old story of redeeming grace and dying love. The blood of Jesus is the dentin of despair. There is no weapon like a testimony to the cleansing blood with which to kill despondency. Tell the sinner that there is no sin that man has done but what the blood can put it away; go to the very gates of hell with your testimony for remission by blood, and you will find some to welcome you upon the borders of destruction. Tell the thieves in prison and the criminals condemned to die, and the reprobates upon their death-beds, that there is still life in a look at the Crucified One, and if you do this you will deliver them from the hardness of heart which saith, "there is no hope." If Satan deceives sinners with false hopes, and causes them to trust in priestcraft and sacramentarianism, there is no way to overcome Satan in them but by the porch of the blood of Jesus. I do believe, brethren, that if the atonement of Christ had been properly preached in the churches of England some years ago, we should not now be pestered with this revived popery; but there has been a great deal of mystification upon the doctrine of satisfaction for sin, a great deal of keeping back of the grand doctrine of vicarious sacrifice, and therefore as men want a Savior and a sacrifice, if you do not present them the true one they will go off to find a false one, and they do find such a false one in the priestcraft of the Roman and Anglican churches. Keep up the preaching of the one finished sacrifice and the dragon must fly. As St. Patrick

is said to have driven out all the venomous creatures from Ireland, so let Jesus Christ come, and all the serpent's seed fly before him—they cannot bear the great truth of the atoning death of the Son of God. Lift up the cross, young man, when you stand in the corners of the streets; whatever you do not know, know the doctrine of the atonement; whatever you cannot tell the people, tell them about Jesus Christ, who hung upon the tree for sinners, and make him the main theme of all your conversation. If you write tracts, if you cannot explain the apocalypse, and few of us can, do explain Calvary, dwell much upon Golgotha and Gethsemane, "for I, if I be lifted up," saith Christ, "will draw all men unto me." Keep to the cross, this is the main attraction; this is the tree whose leaves are for the healing of the nations: this is the central sun of the gospel, and its light will scatter the darkness, but nothing else will do it. Israel never came out of Egypt until the blood of the Lamb was sprinkled on the lintel and the two side posts of the houses: they overcame by the blood of the Lamb. The world of sinners redeemed will never be converted till we bring forth that grandest of all miracles, the Paschal Lamb and the blood by faith sprinkled on the door. Let us evermore proclaim salvation by the dying Lamb, and shake the power of Satan to its foundations.

III. I must close with this last remark, that while they all fought with the same weapons **THEY ALL FOUGHT WITH THE SAME SPIRIT**; for the text says, "they loved not their lives unto the death." My brethren, what does this mean? I wish we could reach to it and interpret it by our lives.

The expression indicates dauntless courage. They were never afraid of the doctrine of a bleeding Savior, nor ashamed to cry, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." Let us never be ashamed of our hope. There is such a straining in these days after learned preaching, such love of

word-spinning and theory-inventing; but let us be fools for Christ's sake, and stick to the old gospel, having no banner for our war but the brazen serpent, lifted high, even Jesus Christ, and him crucified. Let us never yield to sneers or ridicule. Some of us have been styled the echo of the Puritans: yes, the honorable title of "Ultimus Puritanorum," the last of the Puritans, has been assigned to us. It is well, we want no higher degree, for the old theology is very dear to us. We nail our colors to the mast. The atoning blood is the very life, soul, and core of our ministry, and shall be so long as we live.

These men in addition to dauntless courage had unswerving fidelity. They "loved not their lives unto the death." They thought it better to die than to deny the faith. They could not be tempted, or led aside, by bribes and offers of emoluments, and when life itself was put into the scale they did not hesitate, they stuck by the cross. Brethren, I want you all to do this, to have the courage to avow your convictions about Christ, and then the fidelity to stand forth in evil times.

More than that, they were perfect in their consecration. "They loved not their lives unto the death." They gave themselves up, body, soul, and spirit, to the cause of which the precious blood is the symbol, and that consecration led them to perfect self-sacrifice. No Christian of the true type counts anything to be his own. He who really knows the power of the blood of Jesus says, "I am not my own I am bought with a price"; and to him to live or die, to be poor or rich, to be sick or in health, to be in honor or in shame, is not a matter of choice—he is his master's own, and has given himself up unreservedly, loving not his life even to the death. I trow that this is the spirit in which to preach Christ's gospel. Brethren, we shall never see the gospel come to the front so as to conquer the dragon till we bring it there in this spirit. When God shall raise up among us men and women who live only to prove the power of the blood

of Jesus Christ, and live for nothing else; who tell out the Saviours name, and show in their lives what that blood has done for them, and are ready to die to glorify their Lord, then will come the times in which the song of victory shall be heard, then shall the travailing woman have her reward, and then shall the dragon be covered with everlasting shame! May God bless you this morning by giving you to know the power of the blood for Jesus' sake.

Amen.

FORTY-FOUR
SATAN IN A RAGE

NOVEMBER 2, 1879

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 12:12

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 25

*“Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the
sea! for the devil is come down unto you,
having great wrath, because he knoweth that
he hath but a short time.”*

REVELATION 12:12.

THE great battle in the heavenlies has been fought; our glorious Michael has for ever overthrown the dragon, and cast him down. In the highest regions the great principle of evil has received a total defeat through the life and death of our Lord Jesus. For human sin atonement has been made, and the great quarrel between God and man has come to a happy end. Everlasting righteousness has been brought in, and the peace of God

reigns in heaven. The conflict henceforth rages here below, and in these interior regions the prince of this world is warring mightily against the cause of God and truth. Much woe does this cause to the sons of men, woe which will never end till his power is altogether taken away.

Observe concerning our arch-enemy that he exercises forethought and care as to the evil enterprise to which he has set his hand. Whatever foolish men may do, the devil thinks. Others may be heedless and thoughtless, but he is anxious and full of consideration. He knows that his time or "opportunity" is short, and he looks forward to its close, for he is no careless waster of time and forgetter of the end. He values his opportunity to maintain his kingdom, to distress the people of God, and to dishonour the name of Christ, and since it is but a short one he treats it as such.

He infers the brevity of his time from the victory which Jesus has already gained over him. In reading the chapter we saw how the manchild who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron was caught up unto God and to his throne, and then we saw the war in heaven and how the devil was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. Then was a loud voice heard on high, "Now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night." Right well may the old serpent conclude that he will be routed on earth since he has already sustained so dire a defeat that he has fallen from heaven, never to rise again. Because the man-child Christ Jesus has met him in conflict, met him when as yet all his power was unbroken, and has cast him down from his high places, he is persuaded, and well he may be, that his reign is ended, and that his opportunity is short. He feels about him even now a chain which is lengthened for awhile, but which shall be drawn into shorter

compass, and fastened down by-and-by, so that he shall roam the earth no longer, but lie as a captive in his prison-house. Fallen as this apostate spirit has become he has wit enough to look forward to the future. O that men were half as wise, and would remember their latter end. I beg you to notice this fact concerning the evil spirit, that you too may learn to acquire knowledge, and then use it for practical purposes. Why should it always be that the powers of darkness appear to act more wisely than the children of light? For once I would point out a matter in which our worst foe may read us a lesson.

Among men there are some who know a great many important matters, but act as if they did not know them: their knowledge is so much waste stored up in the lumber-room of their minds and never brought into the workshop to be used for practical purposes. For instance, we know our mortality, and yet live as if we never meant to die. There is great necessity for many of us to pray, "Lord, teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." We must know that our time is short, and that our life will soon come to an end, and yet we fail to know it practically, for we are not as earnest as dying men ought to be. In this the arch-enemy is not so foolish as we are, for he so well knows that his time is short that he remembers the fact and is actuated by it.

Note well the direction in which this knowledge operates upon him. It excites his emotions. The deepest emotion of which he is capable is that of anger, for he knows not how to love. Wrath is his very soul, as hatred is his very life; he knows nothing of gentleness, nothing of affection, and therefore the fact that his time is short moves within him his master passion, and he hath great wrath. His evil nature is all on fire, and his excitement is terrible. How much the shortness of our time ought to stir our hearts! With what ardency of love and fervency of zeal ought we to pass the days of our sojourning

here! Knowing that the time of our departure is at hand, and that the season in which we can serve God among the sons of men is very brief, we ought to be excited to flaming zeal and passionate love. We are not half stirred as we ought to be. Devils feel great hatred, how is it that we do not feel great love? Shall they be more eager to destroy than we are to save? Shall they be all alive and shall we be half dead?

Nor is the result of knowing that his time is short merely emotional on the part of the arch enemy, for in consequence of his great wrath he is moved to make earnest efforts. His energy is excited, he persecutes the woman whose seed lie dreads, and he pours floods out of his mouth against her. There is nothing which Satan can do for his evil cause which he does not do. We may be half-hearted, but he never is. He is the very image of ceaseless industry and indefatigable earnestness. He will do all that can be done in the time of his permitted range. We may be sure that he will never lose a day. My brethren, you and I, on the other hand, should be moved by the shortness of our opportunity to an equal energy of incessant industry, serving God continually, because "the night cometh wherein no man can work." My friend, if you want your children brought to Christ, speak to them, for they will soon be without a father; if you wish your servants to be saved, labour for their conversion, for they will soon be without a mistress; if you desire your brother to be converted, speak to him, for your sisterly love will not much longer avail him. Minister, if you would save your congregation by the Spirit of God, seek to do it at once, for your tongue will soon be silent. Teacher in the Sunday-school, if you would have your class gathered into the good Shepherd's fold, treasure up every Sabbath's opportunities, for in a short time the place which knows you now shall know you no more for ever.

Thus as of old the Israelites went down to the Philistines to

sharpen every man his share, and his axe, and his mattock, so have I bidden you quicken your diligence by the example of the prince of darkness. Shall we not learn wisdom from his subtlety, and zeal from his fury? Shall he discern the signs of the times, and therefore bestir himself; and shall we sleep on? Shall evil compass sea and land, and shall the children of God creep about in idleness? God forbid. By the great wrath of the old dragon, I beseech you, my brethren, awake out of your sleep.

The text tells us that the shortness of Satan's opportunity excites his wrath, and we may gather a general rule from this one statement,—namely, that in proportion as the devil's time is shortened his energy is increased, and we may take it as an assured fact that when he rages to the uttermost his opportunities are nearly over. He hath great wrath, knowing that his time is short. I hope there will be something of instruction in this, and somewhat of comfort for all those who are on the right side. May the Holy Ghost make it so.

In the world around us we must not consider that things go altogether amiss when the powers of evil become strong. We should be foolish if we wept in despair because the tares are ripening, for is not the wheat ripening too? True, the dead become more and more corrupt, but if the living become more and more active why should we lament? Because blasphemy grows loud, because infidels seek to undermine the foundation of the faith, or because the clouds of superstition grow more dense, we must not therefore conclude that we have fallen upon evil times, the like of which were never seen before. Not so. Oftentimes the development of evil is an indication that there is an equal or a greater development of good; and the climax of ill is frequently its end. Do you not know that in the world of nature the darkest time of the night is that which precedes the dawning of the day? May it not be the same in the

spiritual and moral world? Does not the old proverb tell us concerning the year, that “as the day lengthens the cold strengthens”? As the spring comes with lengthened days the frosts often grow more sharp and hard. Is it not also plain to the simplest mind that the turning of the tide happens when the ebb has reached its utmost. Even so when evil is at its height it is nearest to its fall. Look for confirmation to the page of history. When the tale of bricks was doubled Moses came to deliver the oppressed. When Pharaoh would by no means let the people go, and his yoke seemed rivetted upon the neck of Israel, then the right arm of God was made bare, and the Red Sea beheld his vengeance. When despots grow most tyrannical liberty’s hour is coming. When the lie becomes exceeding bold, and wears a brazen forehead, then it is that truth confounds her. When Goliath stalks abroad and defies the armies of Israel, then is the stone already in the sling, and the David hard at hand, to lay the giant low. Do not, therefore, dread the advent of greater opposition, nor the apparent increase in strength of those oppositions which already exist, for it has ever been so in the history of events that the hour of the triumph of evil is the hour of its doom. When Belshazzar profanes the holy vessels the handwriting blazes on the wall, and when Hainan is at the king’s banquet of wine seeking the blood of the whole race of the Jews the gallows are prepared for him upon his own roof.

It shall be seen, even to the last hour of history, that the devil rages the more when his empire is the nearer to its end. At the very last he shall go about to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle. They shall come up in great hosts, fierce for the conflict, to “the battle of the great day of God Almighty,” at Armageddon. It shall then seem as if the light of Israel must be quenched, and the truth of God utterly extinguished; but in that dread hour the Lord shall triumph glori-

ously, and he shall smite his adversaries to their final overthrow. Then shall the angel standing in the sun invite the vultures and all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven to gather to the grim feast of vengeance, to eat the flesh of horsemen and men of might: then also shall the devil that deceived them be cast into the lake of fire, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." Then also shall the shout be heard, "Hallelujah, hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." On the greatest possible scale the greatness of the dragon's wrath is a sure prophecy of the end of his reign.

Now, what is true on a great scale is true in the smaller one. Missionaries in any country will generally find that the last onslaught of heathenism is the most ferocious. We shall find, whenever the truth comes into contact with falsehood, that when error is driven to its last entrenchments it fights for life, tooth and nail, with all its might; its wrath is great because its time is short. In any village or town in England, or in any other country, whenever the opposition to the gospel reaches its most outrageous pitch, and men seem as if they would murder the preacher of the word, you may reckon that the power of the opposition is almost over. After the mad fit active persecution will cease, and there will come a time of calm, and perhaps of general reception of the gospel. When once the bad passions of mankind shall have boiled up they will cool down again; hath not the Lord promised to restrain it? As the burning heat of the noontide sun lasts not for ever, but gradually abates when it has reached the hottest point, so is it with the wrath of man, which the foul fiend so often uses for his base purposes.

The same truth will apply to every individual man. When God begins his great work in a sinner's heart, to lead him to Christ, it is no bad sign if the man feels more hatred to God than ever, more dislike to good things than before: nor need we despair if he is driven into greater sin than ever. The ferocity of

the temptation indicates the vigour with which Satan contends for any one of his black sheep. He will not lose his subjects if he can help it, and so he puts forth all his strength to keep them under his power, and he is especially vigilant and furious when the power of grace is about to prevail for their salvation. I will not, however, dwell upon this point, because it is to be the subject of our discourse.

The general fact is further illustrated in the cases of many believers. There are times when in the believer's heart the battle rages horribly, when he hardly knows whether he is a child of God at all, and is ready to give up all hope. He cannot pray or praise, for he is so distracted; he cannot read the Scriptures without horrible thoughts. It seems as if he must utterly perish, for no space is given him in which to refresh his heart, the attacks are so continual and violent. Such dreadful excitements are often followed by years of peace, quiet usefulness, holiness, and communion with God. Satan knows that God is about to set a limit to his vexations of the good man, and so he rages extremely because his opportunity is short. It is very remarkable that some of the greatest of the saints have died in the midst of the most fearful conflicts, from the same reason: the dog howled at them because he knew that they would soon be out of his reach. You would not suppose that Martin Luther, a man so brave and strong that he could defy the Pope and the devil, should on his dying bed be woefully put to it, and yet it was so—his worst struggle was the closing one. He was more than a conqueror, but the fight was severe, as if the devil, that old coward, waited until he had his antagonist down, waited until he was weak and feeble, and then leaped upon him to worry if he could not devour him. Truly Luther had worried the devil, and we do not wonder at the malice of the fiend. Satan knew that he would soon be out of the reach of his fiery arrows for ever, and therefore he must needs have a last shot at

him. It was precisely the case with John Knox, who being observed to sigh deeply was asked the cause of it, and replied, "I have formerly, during my frail life, sustained many tests, and many assaults of Satan; but at present he hath assailed me most fearfully, and put forth all his strength to devour, and make an end of me at once. Often before has he placed my sins before my eyes, often tempted me to despair, often endeavoured to ensnare me by the allurements of the world; but these weapons were broken by the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, and the enemy failed. Now he has attacked me in another way: the cunning serpent has laboured to persuade me that I have merited heaven and eternal blessedness by the faithful discharge of my ministry. But, blessed be God, who has enabled me to beat down and quench this fiery dart by suggesting to me such passages of Scripture as these:— 'What hast thou that thou hast not received?' 'By the grace of God I am what I am: not I, but the grace of God in me.' Upon this, as one vanquished, he left me. Wherefore I give thanks to my God through Jesus Christ, who has been pleased to give me the victory; and I am persuaded that the tempter shall not again attack me, but, within a short time, I shall, without any great pain of body or anguish of mind, exchange this mortal and miserable life for a blessed immortality through Jesus Christ." Do you wonder that the devil was eager to have another knock at one who had given so many knocks to his dominion?

Do not therefore be at all surprised if Satan rages against you, nor marvel if you yourself should seem to be given into his power, but the rather rejoice in this, that his great wrath is the token of the shortness of his time. He wages war with us all the more cruelly because he knows that he will ultimately be defeated. His degraded mind delights in petty malice: if he cannot destroy he will disturb, if he cannot kill he will wound. Subtle as he is he acts right foolishly in pursuing a hopeless

object. In his war against any one of the seed of the woman he knows that he is doomed to defeat, and yet he gnaws at the heel which breaks his head. It is the doom of evil to persevere in its spite after it knows that it is all in vain,— to be for ever vanquished by the invincible seed of the living God, and yet for ever to return to the fray. Sisyphus for ever rolling upward a huge stone which returns upon him is a true picture of the devil vainly labouring to remove the truth out of its place. His is indeed “labour in vain.”

I thought this morning that I would call attention to one particular instance of the fact which is seen in the soul that is coming to Christ, in whom Satan often hath great wrath knowing that his time is short. My object is to comfort those who are awakened, and are seeking the Saviour. If they are sore beset I long that they may find peace, and rest, and hope very speedily. When the poor man who was possessed with an evil spirit was being brought to Christ, we read that “as he was a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him.” That is the way with the great enemy: when he is about to be cast out his energy is more displayed than ever, that if possible he may destroy the soul before it has obtained peace with God. May the sacred Comforter help me while I try to speak encouragingly upon this subject.

I. Our first head shall be, **HOW DOES SATAN KNOW WHEN HIS TIME IS SHORT IN A SOUL?** He watches over all souls that are under his power with incessant maliciousness. He goeth about the camp like a sentinel, spying out every man who is likely to be a deserter from his army. In some men’s hearts he dwells at ease, like a monarch in his pavilion; their minds are his favourite mansions; he goes in and out whenever he pleases, and he makes himself wonderfully much at home. He counts the man’s nature to be his own inheritance, and he works within him after his own evil pleasure. Alas, the deceived

man yields his members instruments of unrighteousness, and is willingly held in thralldom. In such a case all the man's faculties are so many chambers for Satan to dwell in, and his emotions are so many fires and forges for Satan to work with. But by-and-by, if divine grace interposes, there comes a change, and Satan, who has lived there twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty years, begins to think that he shall not be able to keep this residence of his much longer. He perceives that his time is short, and I suppose he perceives it first by discovering that he is not quite so welcome as he used to be. The man loved sin, and found pleasure in it, but now sin is not so sweet as it was, its flavour is dull and insipid. The charms of vice are fading, and its pleasures are growing empty, vain, and void, and this is a token of a great change. Once, whenever a pilgrim sin came that way, the soul kept open house to entertain it with all hospitality, but now it is not half so eager; even the home-dwelling habitual lusts do not yield so much content as aforetime, neither is so much provision made for them. The black prince and his court are out of favour, and this is an intimation that he must soon be gone. When sin loses its sweetness, Satan is losing his power. The adversary perceives that he must soon stretch his dragon wings when he sees that the heart is growing weary of him and is breaking away from his fascinations.

He grows more sure of his speedy ejection when he does not get the accommodation he used to have. The man was once eager for sin, he went in the pursuit of vice, hunted after it, and put himself in the way of temptation, and then Satan reigned securely; but now he begins to forsake the haunts where sin walks openly, and he abandons the cups of excitement which inflame the soul; you find him going to a place of worship, listening to a sermon, whereas before he frequented the theatre, and enjoyed a loose song at a music-hall. The devil does not like this change, and takes it as a warning that he will soon have to

give up the key. The man does not drink as once he did, nor swear as once he did; nor does he yield himself up with readiness to every temptation. The fish is getting shy of the bait. The awakened man has not decided for Christ, but he is no longer at ease in bondage, no longer the glad slave of iniquity. He is on the wrong road, but he does not run in it; on the contrary, he pauses, he heaves a sigh and wishes he could leave the evil road, wishes he knew how to leap a hedge and get into the narrow way. Satan marks all this, and he says to himself, "There is not the preparation made for me that there used to be, there is little readiness to run on my errands, and therefore I perceive that my time is short."

He is still more convinced of the shortness of his possession of a man's heart when he hears knocking at that heart's door a hand whose power he has felt. He knows the kind of knock it is: a gentle, but an irresistible knocking upon the heart. Continual, perpetual, persevering, the knock of one who means to enter; the knock as of one that hath a hole in his hand. He knocketh not as one whose power lies in a blow, but as one whose tears and love are his battery of attack. He hath an energy of compassion, an irresistibleness of gentle love; and as Satan hears his knock, and perceives that the tenant of the house hears it too, and is half inclined to open the door, he is afraid. When the heart relents at the sound of the gospel summons, he trembles more. If the knocking still continues, waking up the tenant in the dead of night, a sound heard amid the noise of traffic and above the laughter of fools, he says, "My time is short." He knows the hand which broke his head of old, and its knocking is ominous to him.

He knows that in the gentleness of Jesus there is an irresistible energy which must and will prevail, and he therefore counts that his possession of the tenement is precarious when the gospel is felt upon the heart. Between the knocks he hears a

voice that saith, "Open to me! Open to me, for my head is wet with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night!" and he knows that this pleading voice bodes the downfall of his power.

Another indication to the enemy that his time is short is when he knows that the tenant of the house steals away sometimes to court, and asks for a warrant of ejectment against him. You know what I mean,— when the man feels that he cannot himself get rid of sin, and cannot in his own strength conquer Satan, and therefore cries, "O God help me, O God for Christ's sake drive out the old dragon from my soul, I beseech thee." This is asking for a warrant of ejectment, this is going to the court of heaven and pleading with the great King to issue a summons, and send his officer to turn out the intruder, that he may no longer pollute the spirit. "Ah," saith the evil one, "this is not the place for me much longer, behold he praveth." More fierce than the flames of hell to Satan are the prayers of convinced sinners: when they pray he must be gone. He must cry "boot and saddle" when men sound the trumpet of prayer. There is no tarrying in the camp any longer when the advance guard of prayer has come to take possession.

One thing more always makes Satan know that his time is short, and that is when the Holy Spirit's power is evidently at work within the mind. Light has come in, and the sinner sees and knows what he was ignorant of before: Satan hates the light as much as he loves darkness, and like an owl in the daylight he feels that he is out of place. Life comes in, too, by the Holy Ghost. The man feels, he becomes sensitive, he becomes penitent, and Satan who loves death, and ever abides among the tombs, is bound to fly before spiritual life. The Holy Spirit is beginning to work upon the man very graciously, and Satan knows every throb of the Spirit's power, for it is the death of his power, and so he saith— "I will go to the place from whence I came out, for this house trembles as if it were shaken with

earthquake, and affords me no rest." Joyful tidings for a heart long molested by this fierce fiend! Away, thou enemy, thy destructions shall soon come to a perpetual end!

II. This brings me, secondly, to notice that, inasmuch as the shortness of his tenure excites the rage of Satan, we must next observe **HOW HE DISPLAYS HIS GREAT WRATH**. His fury rages differently in different persons. On some he displays his great wrath by stirring up outward persecution. The man is not a Christian yet, he is not actually converted yet, but Satan is so afraid that he will be saved that he sets all his dogs upon him directly. The poor soul goes into the workshop, and though he would give his eyes if he could say, "I am a Christian," he cannot quite say so; and yet his workmates begin to pounce upon him as much as if he was in very deed one of the hated followers of Jesus. They scoff at him because he is serious and sober, because he is beginning to think and to be decent, because he begins to listen to the gospel and to care for the best things. Before the man-child is born the dragon is longing to devour him before the man gets to be a Christian the prince of the power of the air labours, if possible, to destroy him. The devil will lose nothing through being behind. He begins as soon as ever grace begins. Now, if the grace of God be not in the awakened man, and his reformation is only a spasm of remorse, it is very likely that He will be driven back from all attendance upon the means of grace by the ribald remarks of the ungodly, but if the Lord Jesus Christ has really been knocking at his door, and the Spirit of God has begun to work, this opposition will not answer its purpose. The Lord will find wings for this poor soul that he may flee away from the trial which as yet he is not able to bear. I have sometimes known such opposition even tend to undo Satan's work, and answer quite the opposite purpose. I know one who was much troubled about the truth of Scripture and about the doctrines of the gospel, although he

was a sincere searcher into the truth. He commenced to attend this house of prayer, and to listen to the gospel, rather as an enquirer than as a believer. As yet he could not say that he was a Christian, though he half wished he could. Now, it came to pass that the opposition which he immediately received from the world strengthened his faith in the Bible, and became a sort of missing link between him and the truth. The sneers of his comrades acted in this way. He said to himself, "Why should they all attack me on the bare supposition of my being a Christian? If I had been a Mahometan or a Jew they would have regarded me with curiosity, and let me alone; but inasmuch as they only suspect me of becoming a Christian they are all down upon me with contempt and anger. Now (said he), why is this? Is not this a proof that I am right, and that the word of God is right, for did it not say that there should be enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman?" The devil did not know what he was doing when he opposed that young man and made a believer of him by that which was meant to drive him into unbelief. If the men of this world oppose the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ more fiercely than any other, surely it must be that there is something special in it, something opposed to their sinful ways or to their proud hopes, something which is of God. That was the inference which my young friend drew from the treatment he received, and that inference established him in the faith. Thus, you see, Satan often hopes to save his dominion when his time is short by vehement persecution against the awakened sinner.

Much worse, however, is his other method of showing his wrath, namely, by vomiting floods out of his mouth to drown, if possible, our new-born hope. When the hopeful hearer as yet has not really found peace and rest, it will sometimes happen that Satan will try him with doubts, and blasphemies, and temptations such as he never knew before. The tempted one

has been amazed and has said to himself, "How is this? Can my desire after Christ be the work of God? I get worse and worse. I never felt so wicked as this till I began to seek a Saviour." Yet this is no strange thing, fiery though the trial be.

Satan will suggest all the doubts he can upon the inspiration of Scripture, the existence of a God, the deity of Christ, and everything else that is revealed, till the poor heart that is earnestly longing for salvation will scarcely know whether there is anything true at all. The man will be so tumbled up and down in his thoughts that he will hardly know whether he is on his head or his heels. "They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end." The more they read the Bible, the more they attend the means of grace, the more are they tempted to be sceptical and atheistic. Doubts they never knew before will torment them even while they strive to be devout. The evil tenant has notice to quit, and he makes up his mind to do all the damage within his power, while he is yet within the doors. See how he breaks up precious truths, and dashes down the richest hopes, and all with the detestable design of venting his spite upon the poor soul.

At such time, also, Satan will often arouse all the worst passions of our nature, and drive them into unwonted riot. The awakened sinner will be astonished as he finds himself beset with temptations more base and foul than he has ever felt before. He will resist and strive against the assault, but it may be so violent as to stagger him. He can scarcely believe that the flesh is so utterly corrupt. The man who is anxiously seeking to go to heaven seems at such a time as if he were dragged down by seven strong demons to the eternal deeps of perdition. He feels as if he had never known sin before, nor been so completely beneath its power. The Satanic troopers sleep as a quiet garrison while the man is under the spell of sin, but when once the heart is likely to be captured by Immanuel's love the

infernal soldiery put on their worst manner, and trample down all the thoughts and desires of the soul.

Satan may also attack the seeker in another form, with fierce accusations and judgments. He does not accuse some men, for he is quite sure of them, and they are his very good friends; but when a man is likely to be lost to him, he alters his tone and threatens and condemns. He cries, "What, you be saved! It is impossible! You know what you used to be. Think of your past life." Then he rakes up a very hell before the man's eyes. "You!" saith he, "why even since you have pretended to be a little better, and have begun to attend the means of grace, you know you have looked back with a longing eye, and hungered for your old pleasures. It is quite out of the question that you should be a servant of Christ! He will not have such a tatterdemalion as you in his house. The great Captain will never march at the head of a regiment which is disgraced by receiving such as you." Bunyan describes Apollyon as standing across the road and swearing by his infernal den that the pilgrim should go no further; there would he spill his soul. Then he began to fling at him all manner of fiery darts, and among them was this one, "Thou didst faint at first setting out, when thou wast almost choked in the gulf of Despond. Thou wast almost persuaded to go back at the sight of the Lions. Thou hast been false already to thy new Lord!" Think for a moment of the devil chiding us for sin! Oh, that the poor burdened soul could laugh at this hypocritical accuser, for he hates to be despised, and yet he right well deserves it. Laugh at him, O virgin daughter of Zion, for this great wrath of his is because his time is short. Who is he that he should bring an accusation against us? Let him mind himself; he has enough to answer for. When he turns an accuser it is enough to make the child of God laugh him to scorn. Yet it is not easy to laugh when you are in this predicament, for the heart is ready to break with anguish.

Once more. Satan at such times has been known to pour into the poor troubled mind floods of blasphemy. I do not recollect as a child having heard blasphemy. Carefully brought up and kept out of harm's way, I think it could only have been once or twice that I ever heard profane language; and yet, when I was seeking the Lord, I distinctly remember the spot where the most hideous blasphemies that ever passed the human mind rushed through my mind. I clapped my hands to my mouth for fear I should utter one of them. They were none of my inventing, neither had I revived them from my memory, they were the immediate suggestions of Satan himself, who was determined, if possible, to drive me to despair. Read the story of John Bunyan's five years of torture under this particular misery, and you will see how Satan would say to him, "Sell Christ, Sell Christ, Give up Christ," and as he went about his daily business he would have it ringing in his ears "Sell Christ, Sell Christ." When at last, in a moment of worry, he thought he said, "Let him go if he will then came the accusation, "Now it is all over with you. Jesus will have nothing to do with you, you have given him up. You are a Judas, you have sold your Lord." Then when the poor man sought the Lord with tears, and found peace again, some other dreadful insinuation would dog his heels. John Banyan was too precious a servant of the devil for him to lose him readily, and the enemy had perhaps some idea of what kind of servant of God the converted tinker would become, and what sort of dreams would charm the hearts of many generations, and so he would not let him go without summoning all the tribes of hell to wreak their vengeance on him if they could not detain him in their service. Yet Bunyan escaped, and so will others in like case. Oh, bondsman of the devil, may you have grace to steal away to Jesus. Hasten away from Satan's power at once, for otherwise he will as long as he has any opportunity manifest his great wrath towards you.

III. Thirdly, and briefly, let us think— HOW ARE WE TO MEET ALL THIS? How must Satan be dealt with while he is showing his great wrath because his power is short?

I should say, first, if he is putting himself in this rage, let us get him out all the more quickly. If he would remain quiet even then we ought to be anxious to be rid of his foul company, but if he shows this great rage let us out with him straight away. In God's name let the dragon be smitten if he must needs be raving. If there is any opportunity of getting him out, back door or front door, straight away, do not let us loiter or linger even for a single hour: a devil raging, making us blaspheme, and then accusing us, tempting us and betraying us, is such a dangerous occupant of a heart that he is not to be borne with. Out he must go, and out at once. Better have a den of lions dwelling in our house than the devil within our heart. Lord, turn him out at once by thine own grace. We decide once for all to wage war with him; we will linger no longer, we dare not; we will procrastinate no more, it is more than our lives are worth. Nay, not to-morrow, but to-day out must the tyrant go. Nay, not after we leave this Tabernacle, but here, in this very pew, O Lord, drive the old dragon from his throne with all his hellish crew! That is the first advice I give you, let the enemy be cast out at once by grace divine.

And the next thing is, inasmuch as we cannot get him out by our own unaided efforts, let us cry to the strong for strength, who can drive out this prince of the power of the air. There is life in a look at Jesus Christ, and as soon as that life comes away goes this prince of darkness as to his domination and reigning power. Oh, soul, there is nothing left for thee but to look to Jesus Christ alone. Worried as thou art, and almost devoured, now is thy time to put thy trust in Jesus, who is mighty to save. You know the text which speaketh of the shepherds taking out of the lion's mouth two legs and a piece of an ear. The sheep

was almost devoured, but still he pulled out from between the lion's jaws the last relics of his prey, and if you seem to be reduced to two legs and a piece of an ear, yet still our glorious Shepherd can pull you out from between the lion's teeth and make you whole again, for he will not lose his sheep even at its last extremity. What canst thou do against Satan? Thou wouldst fain be rid of him, what canst thou do? Do nothing but this, Cry to his Master against him. He is mighty, set the Almighty One upon him. He accuses thee, refer him to thine Advocate. Thy sin he brings before thee, throw the blood of atonement in his face. Here is a text that will drive him down to his den: "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." And "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." Have done with battling with the wily foe; do not answer the old deceiver. If he tells thee thou art a blasphemer, own it; if he says thou art utterly lost, own it; and then cast thyself at Jesus's feet, and he will overcome thy foe and set thee free.

One more comfort for you, and it is this—the more he rages the more must your poor, troubled heart be encouraged to believe that he will soon be gone. I venture to say that nothing will make him go sooner than your full belief that he has to go. Courageous hope is a weapon which he dreads. Tell him he must soon be gone. He has been accusing you, and pouring venom into your ear, and making you believe that it is your own blasphemy, whereas it is not yours but his. Say to him, "Ah, but you will be gone soon. You may rage, but you will have to be gone." "I have full possession of you," he says, "soul and body, and I triumph over you." Say to him, "And would you triumph over me as you do if you did not know that you will soon be driven out?" "Ah," saith he, "you will be lost, you will be lost." He howls at you as if ready to devour. Say to him, "If I was sure

to be lost you would not tell me so, you would sing sweet songs in my ears, and lure me to destruction: you have to go, you know you have." "Oh," saith he, "it is impossible you should be saved; you will be damned; you will have the hottest place in hell." "Yes," say you, "but who sent you to tell me that? You never spoke the truth yet. You are a liar from the beginning, and you are only saying this because you have to go. You know you have to go." Tell him so, and it is not long before he will depart. Say, "Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy; though I fall yet shall I rise again." Tell him you know his Master. Tell him he may nibble at your heel, but you recollect one that broke his head. Point to his broken head — he always tries to hide it if he can. Tell him his crown is battered to pieces, and tell him where that deed was done, and by whose blessed hand; and as you tell him these things he will shrink back, and you shall find yourself alone with Jesus only. Then will Jesus say to you, "Where is thine accuser?" You will look around and the enemy will be gone, and then your blessed Master will say, "Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more." The Lord grant us to get such a riddance of our arch-enemy, and to get it this very moment, for Christ's dear sake.

Amen.

REVELATION 14

FORTY-FIVE HEAVENLY WORSHIP

SERMON GIVEN ON DECEMBER 28, 1856

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 14:1-3

FROM: NEW PARK STREET PULPIT VOLUME 3

"And I looked, and lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps; And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders; and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth."

REVELATIONS 14:1-3

The scene of this marvellous and magnificent vision is laid upon Mount Sion; by which we are to understand, not Mount Sion upon earth, but Mount Sion which is above, "Jerusalem, the mother of us all." To the Hebrew mind Mount Sion was a type of heaven, and very justly so. Among all the mountains of the earth none was to be found so famous as Sion. It was there that patriarch Abraham drew his knife to slay his son; it was there, too, in commemoration of that great triumph of faith, Solomon built a majestic temple, "beautiful for situation and the joy of the whole earth." That Mount Sion was the centre of all the devotions of the Jews.

*"Up to her courts, with joys unknown,
The sacred tribes repaired."*

Between the wings of the cherubim Jehovah dwelt; on the one altar there all the sacrifices were offered to high heaven. They loved Mount Sion, and often did they sing, when they drew nigh to her, in their annual pilgrimages, "How amiable are thy tabernacles O Lord God of hosts, my King and my God!" Sion is now desolate; she hath been ravished by the enemy; she hath been utterly destroyed; her vail hath been rent asunder, and the virgin daughter of Sion is now sitting in sackcloth and ashes; but, nevertheless, to the Jewish mind it must ever, in its ancient state, remain the best and sweetest type of heaven. John, therefore, when he saw this sight might have said, "I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood in heaven, and with him an hundred and forty and four thousand having his Father's name written in their foreheads: And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder; and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that

song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth."

This morning I shall endeavour to show you, first of all, the object of heavenly worship—the Lamb in the midst of the throne; in the next place we shall look at the worshippers themselves, and note their manner and their character; in the third place we shall listen to hear their song, for we may almost hear it; it is like "the noise of many waters and like great thunder;" and then we shall close by noting, that it is a new song which they sing, and by endeavouring to mention one or two reasons why it must necessarily be so.

I. In the first place, then, we wish to take a view of THE OBJECT OF HEAVENLY WORSHIP. The divine John was privileged to look within the gates of pearl; and on turning round to tell us what he saw—observe how he begins—he saith not, "I saw streets of gold or walls of Jasper;" he saith not, "I saw crowns, marked their lustre, and saw the wearers." That he shall notice afterwards. But he begins by saying, "I looked, and, lo, a Lamb!" To teach us that the very first and chief object of attraction in the heavenly state is "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world." Nothing else attracted the Apostle's attention so much as the person of that Divine Being, who is the Lord God, our most blessed Redeemer: "I looked, and, lo a Lamb!" Beloved, if we were allowed to look within the vail which parts us from the world of spirits, we should see, first of all, the person of our Lord Jesus. If now we could go where the immortal spirits "day without night circle the throne rejoicing," we should see each of them with their faces turned in one direction; and if we should step up to one of the blessed spirits, and say, "O bright immortal, why are thine eyes fixed? What is it that absorbs thee quite, and wraps thee up in vision?" He, without deigning to give an answer, would simply point to the centre of the sacred circle, and lo, we should see a Lamb in the

midst of the throne. They have not yet ceased to admire his beauty, and marvel at his wonders and adore his person.

*"Amidst a thousand harps and songs,
Jesus, our God, exalted reigns."*

He is the theme of song and the subject of observation of all the glorified spirits and of all the angels in paradise. "I looked, and, lo, a Lamb!"

Christian, here is joy for thee; thou hast looked, and thou hast seen the Lamb. Through thy tearful eyes thou hast seen the Lamb taking away thy sins. Rejoice, then! In a little while, when thine eyes shall have been wiped from tears, thou wilt see the same Lamb exalted on his throne. It is the joy of the heart to hold daily fellowship and communion with Jesus; thou shalt have the same joy in heaven; "there shalt thou see him as he is, and thou shalt be like him." Thou shalt enjoy the constant vision of his presence, and thou shalt dwell with him for aye. "I looked, and, lo, a Lamb!" Why, that Lamb is heaven itself; for as good Rutherford says, "Heaven and Christ are the same things; to be with Christ is to be in heaven, and to be in heaven is to be with Christ." And he very sweetly says in one of his letters, wrapped up in love to Christ. "Oh! my Lord Christ, if I could be in heaven without thee, it would be a hell; and if I could be in hell, and have thee still, it would be a heaven to me, for thou art all the heaven I want." It is true, is it not Christian? Does not thy soul say so?

*"Not all the harps above
Could make a heavenly place,
Should Christ his residence remove,
Or but conceal his face."*

All thou needest to make thee blessed, supremely blessed, is "to be with Christ, which is far better."

And now observe the figure under which Christ is represented in heaven. "I looked, and, lo, a Lamb." Now, you know Jesus, in Scripture, is often represented as a lion: he is so to his enemies, for he devoureth them, and teareth them to pieces. "Beware, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." But in heaven he is in the midst of his friends, and therefore he

*"Looks like a lamb that has been slain,
And wears his priesthood still."*

Why should Christ in heaven choose to appear under the figure of a lamb, and not in some other of his glorious characters? We reply, because it was as a lamb that Jesus fought and conquered, and, therefore as a lamb he appears in heaven. I have read of certain military commanders, when they were conquerors, that on the anniversary of their victory they would never wear anything but the garment in which they fought. On that memorable day they say, "Nay, take away the robes; I will wear the garment which has been embroidered with the sabrecut, and garnished with the shot that hath riddled it; I will wear no other garb but that in which I fought and conquered." It seems as if the same feeling possessed the breast of Christ. "As a Lamb," saith he, "I died, and worsted hell; as a Lamb I have redeemed my people, and therefore as a Lamb I will appear in paradise."

But, perhaps, there is another reason; it is to encourage us to come to him in prayer. Ah, believer, we need not be afraid to come to Christ, for he is a Lamb. To a lion-Christ we need fear to come; but the Lamb-Christ!—oh, little children, were ye ever afraid of lambs? Oh, children of the living God, should ye ever

fail to tell your griefs and sorrows into the breast of one who is a Lamb? Ah, let us come boldly to the throne of the heavenly grace, seeing a Lamb sits upon it. One of the things which tend very much to spoil prayer-meetings is the fact that our brethren do not pray boldly. They would practice reverence, as truly they ought, but they should remember that the highest reverence is consistent with true familiarity. No man more reverent than Luther; no man more fully carried out for the passage, "He talked with his Maker as a man talketh with his friend." We may be as reverent as the angels, and yet we may be as familiar as children in Christ Jesus. Now, our friends, when they pray, very frequently say the same thing every time. They are Dissenters; they cannot bear the Prayer Book; they think that forms of prayer are bad, but they always use their own form of prayer notwithstanding; as much as if they were to say that the bishop's form would not do, but their own they must always use. But a form of prayer being wrong, is as much wrong when I make it as when the bishop makes it; I am as much out of order in using what I compose myself continually and constantly, as I am when I am using one that has been composed for me; perhaps far more so, as it is not likely to be one-half so good. If our friends, however, would lay aside the form into which they grow, and break up the stereotyped plates with which they print their prayers so often, they might come boldly to the throne of God, and need never fear to do so; for he whom they address is represented in heaven under the figure of a Lamb, to teach us to come close to him, and tell him all our wants, believing that he will not disdain to hear them.

And you will further notice that this Lamb is said to stand. Standing is the posture of triumph. The Father said to Christ, "Sit thou on my throne, till I make thine enemies thy footstool." It is done; they are his footstool, and here he is said to stand erect, like a victor over all his enemies. Many a time the Saviour

kneled in prayer; once he hung upon the cross; but when the great scene of our text shall be fully wrought out, he shall stand erect, as more than conqueror, through his own majestic might. "I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Sion." Oh, if we could rend the veil—if now we were privileged to see within it—there is no sight would so enthrall us as the simple sight of the Lamb in the midst of the throne. My dear brethren and sisters in Christ Jesus, would it not be all the sight you would ever wish to see, if you could once behold him whom your soul loveth? Would it not be a heaven to you, if it were carried out in your experience—"Mine eye shall see him, and not another's?" Would you want anything else to make you happy but continually to see him? Can you not say with the poet—

*"Millions of years my wondering eyes
Shall o'er my Saviour's beauty rove,
And endless ages I'll adore
The wonders of his love?"*

And if a single glimpse of him on earth affords you profound delight; it must be, indeed, a very sea of bliss, and an abyss of paradise, without a bottom or a shore, to see him as he is; to be lost in his splendours, as the stars are lost in the sunlight, and to hold fellowship with him, as did John the beloved, when he leaned his head upon his bosom. And this shall be thy lot, to see the Lamb in the midst of the throne.

II. The second point is, THE WORSHIPPERS, WHO ARE THEY? Turn to the text, and you will not, first of all, their numbers—"I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand." This is a certain number put for an uncertain—I mean uncertain to us, though not uncertain to God. It is a vast number, put for that "multitude which no man can number," who shall stand

before the throne of God. Now, here is something not very pleasant to my friend Bigot yonder. Note the number of those who are to be saved; they are said to be a great number, even a "hundred forty and four thousand," which is but a unit put for the vast innumerable multitude who are to be gathered home. Why, my friend, there are so many as that belonging to your church. You believe that none will be saved but those who hear your minister, and believe your creed; I do not think you could find one hundred and forty-four thousand anywhere. You will have to enlarge your heart I think; you must take in a few more, and not be so inclined to shut out the Lord's people, because you cannot agree with them. I do abhor from my heart that continual whining of some men about their own little church as the "remnant"—the "few that are to be saved." They are always dwelling upon strait gates and narrow ways, and upon what they conceive to be a truth, that but few shall enter heaven. Why, my friends, I believe there will be more in heaven than in hell. If you ask me why I think so, I answer, because Christ, in everything, is to "have the pre-eminence," and I cannot conceive how he could have the pre-eminence if there are to be more in the dominions of Satan than in paradise. Moreover, it is said there is to be a multitude that no man can number in heaven; I have never read that there is to be a multitude that no man can number in hell. But I rejoice to know that the souls of all infants, as soon as they die, speed their way to paradise. Think what a multitude there is of them! And then there are the just, and the redeemed of all nations and kindreds up till now; and there are better times coming, when the religion of Christ shall be universal; when he shall reign from pole to pole with illimitable sway; when kingdoms shall bow before him, and nations be born in a day; and in the thousand years of the great millennial state there will be enough saved to make up all the deficiencies of the thousands of years that have gone before. Christ

shall have the pre-eminence at last; his train shall be far larger than that which shall attend the chariots of the grim monarch of hell. Christ shall be master everywhere, and his praise sounded in every land. One hundred and forty-four thousand were observed, the types and representatives of a far larger number who are ultimately to be saved.

But notice, whilst the number is very large, how very certain it is. By turning over the leaves of your Bible to a previous chapter of this book, you will see that at the 4th verse it is written, that one hundred and forty-four thousand were sealed; and now we find there are one hundred and forty-four thousand saved; not 143,999, and 144,001, but exactly the number that are sealed. Now, my friends may not like what I am going to say; but if they do not like it, their quarrel is with God's Bible, not with me. There will be just as many in heaven as are sealed by God—just as many as Christ did purchase with his blood; all of them, and no more and no less. There will be just as many there as were quickened to life by the Holy Spirit, and were, "born again, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." "Ah," some say, "there is that abominable doctrine of election." Exactly so, if it be abominable; but you will never be able to cut it out of the Bible. You may hate it, and gnash and grind your teeth against it; but, remember, we can trace the pedigree of this doctrine, even apart from Scripture, to the time of the apostles. Church of England ministers and members, you have no right to differ from me on the doctrine of election, if you are what you profess by your own Articles. You who love the old Puritans, you have no right to quarrel with me; for where will you find a Puritan who was not a strong Calvinist? You who love the fathers, you cannot differ from me. What say you of Augustine? Was he not, in his day, called a great and mighty teacher of grace? And I even turn to Roman Catholics, and, with all the errors of their

system, I remind them that even in their body have been found those who have held that doctrine, and, though long persecuted for it, have never been expelled the church. I refer to the Jansenists. But, above all, I challenge every man who reads his Bible to say that that doctrine is not there. What saith the 9th of Romans? "The children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth: It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger." And then it goes on to say to the carping objector—"Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?" But enough on this subject.

One hundred and forty-four thousand, we say, is a certain number made to represent the certainty of the salvation of all God's elect, believing people. Now, some say that this doctrine has a tendency to discourage men from coming to Christ. Well, you say so; but I have never seen it, and blessed be God I have never proved it so. I have preached this doctrine ever since I began to preach; but I can say this,—ye shall not (and I am now become a fool in glorying) ye shall not find among those who have not preached the doctrine, one who has been the instrument of turning more harlots, more drunkards, and more sinners of every class, from the error of their ways, than I have, by the simple preaching of the doctrine of free grace; and, while this has been so, I hold that no argument can be brought to prove that it has a tendency to discourage sinners, or bolster them up in sin. We hold, as the Bible says, that all the elect, and those only, shall be saved; all who go to Christ are elect. So that if any of you have in your heart a desire after heaven and after Christ; if you carry out that desire in sincere and earnest

prayer, and are born again, you may as certainly conclude your election as you can conclude that you are alive. You must have been chosen of God before the foundation of the world, or you would never have done any of these things, seeing they are the fruits of election.

But why should it keep any one from going to Christ? "Because," says one, "if I go to Christ I may not be elect." No, sir, if you go, you prove that you are elect. "But," says another, "I am afraid to go, in case I should not be elect." Say as an old woman once said, "If there were only three persons elected, I would try to be one of them; and since he said, 'He that believeth shall be saved,' I would challenge God on his promise, and try if he would break it." No, come to Christ; and if you do so, beyond a doubt you are God's elect from the foundation of the world; and therefore this grace has been given to you. But why should it discourage you? Suppose there are a number of sick folk here, and a large hospital has been built. There is put up over the door, "All persons who come shall be taken in:" at the same time it is known that there is a person inside the hospital, who is so wise that he knows all who will come, and has written down the names of all who will come in a book, so that, when they come, those who open the doors will only say, "How marvelously wise our Master was, to know the names of those who would come." Is there anything despiriting in that? You would go, and you would have all the more confidence in that man's wisdom, because he was able to know before that they were going. "Ah, but," you say, "it was ordained that some should come." Well, to give you another illustration; suppose there is a rule that there always must be a thousand persons, or a very large number in the hospital. You say, "When I go perhaps they will take me in, and perhaps they will not." "But," says someone, "there is a rule that there must be a thousand in: somehow or other they must make up that number of beds, and have that

number of patients in the hospital." You say, "Then why should not I be among the thousand; and have not I the encouragement that whosoever goes shall not be cast out? And have I not again the encouragement, that if they will not go, they must be fetched in somehow or other; for the number must be made up; so it is determined and so it is decreed." You would therefore have a double encouragement, instead of half a one; and you would go with confidence, and say, "They must take me in, because they say they will take all in that come; and on the other hand, they must take me in, because they must have a certain number: that number is not made up, and why should not I be one?" Oh, never doubt about election; believe in Christ, and then rejoice in election; do not fret about it till you have believed in Christ.

"I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand." And who were these people, "having his Father's name written in their foreheads?" Not Bs for "Baptists," not Ws for "Wesleyans," not Es for "Established Church:" they had their Father's name and nobody else's. What a deal of fuss is made on earth about our distinctions! We think such a deal about belonging to this denomination, and the other. Why, if you were to go to heaven's gates, and ask if they had any Baptists there, the angel would only look at you, and not answer you; if you were to ask if they had any Wesleyans, or members of the Established Church, he would say, "Nothing of the sort;" but if you were to ask him whether they had any Christians there, "Ay," he would say, "an abundance of them: they are all one now—all called by one name; the old brand has been obliterated, and now they have not the name of this man or the other; they have the name of God, even their Father, stamped on their brow." Learn then dear friends, whatever the connection to which you belong, to be charitable to your brethren, and kind to them, seeing that,

after all, the name you now hold here will be forgotten in heaven, and only your Father's name will be there known.

One more remark here, and we will turn from the worshippers to listen to their song. It is said of all these worshippers that they learned the song before they went there. At the end of the third verse it is said, "No man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth." Brethren, we must begin heaven's song here below, or else we shall never sing it above. The choristers of heaven have all had rehearsals upon earth, before they sing in that orchestra. You think that, die when you may, you will go to heaven, without being prepared. Nay, sir; heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people, and unless you are "made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light," you can never stand there among them. If you were in heaven without a new heart and a right spirit, you would be glad enough to get out of it; for heaven, unless a man is heavenly himself, would be worse than hell. A man who is unrenewed and unregenerate going to heaven would be miserable there. There would be a song—he could not join in it; there would be a constant hallelujah, but he would not know a note: and besides, he would be in the presence of the Almighty, even in the presence of the God he hates, and how could he be happy there? No, sirs; ye must learn the song of paradise here, or else ye can never sing it. Ye must learn to sing—

*"Jesus, I love thy charming name,
'Tis music to my ears."*

You must learn to feel that "sweeter sounds than music knows mingle in your Saviour's name," or else you can never chaunt the hallelujahs of the blest before the throne of the great "I AM." Take that thought, whatever else you forget; treasure it

up in your memory, and ask grace of God that you may here be taught to sing the heavenly song, that afterwards in the land of the hereafter, in the home of the beautified, you may continually chaunt the high praises of him that loved you.

III. And now we come to the third and most interesting point, namely, **THE LISTENING TO THEIR SONG.** "I heard a voice form heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps;" singing—how loud and yet how sweet!

First, then, singing how loud! It is said to be "like the voice of many waters." Have you never heard the sea roar, and the fulness thereof? Have you never walked by the sea-side, when the waves were singing, and when every little pebble-stone did turn chorister, to make up music to the Lord God of hosts? And have you never in time of storm beheld the sea, with its hundred hands, clapping them in gladsome adoration of the Most High? Have you never heard the sea roar out his praise, when the winds were holding carnival—perhaps singing the dirge of mariners, wrecked far out on the stormy deep, but far more likely exalting God with their hoarse voice, and praising him who makes a thousand fleets sweep over them in safety, and writes his furrows on their own youthful brow? Have you never heard the rumbling and booming of ocean on the shore, when it has been lashed into fury and has been driven upon the cliffs? If you have, you have a faint idea of the melody of heaven. It was "as the voice of many waters." But do not suppose that it is the whole of the idea. It is not the voice of one ocean, but the voice of many, that is needed to give you an idea of the melodies of heaven. You are to suppose ocean piled upon ocean, sea upon sea,—the Pacific piled upon the Atlantic, the Arctic upon that, the Antarctic higher still, and so ocean upon ocean, all lashed to fury, and all sounding with a mighty voice

the praise of God. Such is the singing of heaven. Or if the illustration, fails to strike, take another. We have mentioned here two or three times the mighty falls of Niagara. They can be heard at a tremendous distance, so awful is their sound. Now, suppose waterfalls dashing upon waterfalls, cataracts upon cataracts, Niagaras upon Niagaras, each of them sounding forth their mighty voices, and you have got some idea of the singing of paradise. "I heard a voice like the voice of many waters." Can you not hear it? Ah! if our ears were opened we might almost cast the song. I have thought sometimes that the voice of the Aeolian harp, when it has swollen out grandly, was almost like an echo of the songs of those who sing before the throne; and on the summer eve, when the wind has come in gentle zephyrs through the forest, you might almost think it was the floating of some stray notes that had lost their way among the harps of heaven, and come down to us, to give us some faint foretaste of that song which hymns out in mighty peals before the throne of the Most High. But why so loud? The answer is, because there are so many there to sing. Nothing is more grand than the singing of multitudes. Many have been the persons who have told me that they could but weep when they heard you sing in this assembly, so mighty seemed the sound when all the people sang—

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

And, indeed, there is something very grand in the singing of multitudes. I remember hearing 12,000 sing on one occasion in the open air. Some of our friends were then present, when we concluded our service with that glorious hallelujah. Have you ever forgotten it? It was indeed a mighty sound; it seemed to make heaven itself ring again. Think, then, what must be the voice of those who stand on the boundless plains of heaven, and

with all their might shout, "Glory and honour and power and dominion unto him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever."

One reason, however, why the song is so loud is a very simple one, namely, because all those who are there think themselves bound to sing the loudest of all. You know our favourite hymn—

*"Then loudest of the crowd I'll sing,
While heav'n's resounding mansions ring
With shouts of sov'reign grace."*

And every saint will join that sonnet, and each one lift up his heart to God, then how mighty must be the strain of praise that will rise up to the throne of the glorious God our Father!

But note next, while it was a loud voice, how sweet it was. Noise is not music. There may be "a voice like many waters," and yet no music. It was sweet as well as loud; for John says, "I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps." Perhaps the sweetest of all instruments is the harp. There are others which give forth sounds more grand and noble, but the harp is the sweetest of all instruments. I have sometimes sat to hear a skilful harper, till I could say, "I could sit and hear myself away," whilst with skilful fingers he touched the chords gently, and brought forth strains of melody which flowed like liquid silver, or like sounding honey into one's soul. Sweet, sweet beyond sweetness; words can scarcely tell how sweet the melody. Such is the music of heaven. No jarring notes there, no discord, but all one glorious harmonious song. You will not be there, formalist, to spoil the tune; nor you, hypocrite, to mar the melody; there will be all those there whose hearts are right with God, and therefore the strain will be one great harmonious whole, without a discord. Truly do we sing—

*"No groans to mingle with the songs
That warble from immortal tongues."*

And there will be no discord of any other sort to spoil the melody of those before the throne. Oh! my beloved hearers, that we might be there! Lift us up, ye cherubs! Stretch your wings, and bear us up where the sonnets fill the air. But if ye must not, let us wait our time.

*"A few more rolling suns at most,
Will land us on fair Canaan's coast;"*

and then we shall help to make the song, which now we can scarcely conceive, but which yet we desire to join.

IV. We now close with a remark upon the last point: WHY IS THE SONG SAID TO BE A NEW SONG? But one remark here. It will be a new song, because the saints were never in such a position before as they will be when they sing this new song. They are in heaven now; but the scene of our text is something more than heaven. It refers to the time when all the chosen race shall meet around the throne, when the last battle shall have been fought, and the last warrior shall have gained his crown. It is not now that they are thus singing, but it is in the glorious time to come, when all the hundred and forty and four thousand—or rather, the number typified by that number—will be all safely housed and all secure. I can conceive the period. Time was—eternity now reigns. The voice of God exclaims, "Are my beloved all safe?" The angel flies through paradise and returns with this message, "Yea, they are." "Is Fearful safe? Is Feeble-mind safe? Is Ready-to-Halt safe? Is Despondency safe?" "Yes, O king, they are," says he. "Shut-to the gates," says the Almighty, "they have been open night and day; shut them to now." Then, when all of them shall be there,

then will be the time when the shout shall be louder than many waters, and the song shall begin which will never end. There is a story told in the history of brave Oliver Cromwell, which I use here to illustrate this new song. Cromwell and his Ironsides before they went to battle bowed the knee in prayer, and asked for God's help. Then, with their Bibles in their breasts, and their swords in their hands—a strange and unjustifiable mixture, but which their ignorance must excuse—they cried, "The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge;" and rushing to battle they sang—

*"O Lord our God, arise and let
Thine enemies scattered be,
And let all those that do thee hate
Before thy presence flee."*

They had to fight up hill for a long time, but at last the enemy fled. The Ironsides were about to pursue them and win the booty, when the stern harsh voice of Cromwell was heard—"Halt! halt! now the victory is won, before you rush to the spoil return thanks to God;" and they sang some such song as this—"Sing unto the Lord, for he has gotten us the victory! Sing unto the Lord." It was said to have been one of the most majestic sights in that strange, yet good man's history. (I say that word without blushing, for good he was.) For a time the hills seemed to leap, whilst the vast multitude, turning from the slain, still stained with blood, lifted up their hearts to God. We say, again, it was a strange sight, yet a glad one. But how great shall be that sight, when Christ shall be seen as a conqueror, and when all his warriors, fighting side by side with him, shall see the dragon beaten in pieces beneath their feet. Lo, their enemies are fled; they were driven like thin clouds before a Biscay gale. They are all gone, death is vanquished, Satan is

cast into the lake of fire, and here stands the King himself, crowned with many crowns, the victor of the victors. And in the moment of exaltation the Redeemer will say, "Come let us sing unto the Lord;" and then, louder than the shout of many waters, they shall sing, "Hallelujah! the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." Ah! that will be the full carrying out of the great scene! My feeble words cannot depict it. I send you away with this simple question, "Shall you be there to see the conqueror crowned?" Have you "a good hope through grace" that you shall?

If so, be glad; if not, go to your houses, fall on your knees, and pray to God to save you from that terrible place which must certainly be your portion, instead of that great heaven of which I preach, unless you turn to God with full purpose of heart.

FORTY-SIX
THE LAMB OUR LEADER

SERMON GIVEN ON MARCH 7, 1886

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 14:4

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 42

“These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.”

REVELATION 14:4.

You, dear friends, who belong to the Tabernacle, are well acquainted with our venerable friend, George Rogers. It was a great joy to me to find him alive when I came home from the Continent; he said that he must keep on living till he had seen me once more, and then he hoped that he should go home. That was a month ago, but yesterday I saw him again, and he seemed to be greatly revived and refreshed. He has attained an extremely advanced age, and it is only natural that he should soon go to his rest and reward. He remarked to me, yesterday,

that he had bidden farewell to the world entirely, and he did not wish to renew the acquaintance; he did not know why he should linger here any longer, for everything was finished, and he was ready to depart; and then he said to me, in his cheery way, "I wonder whether I shall see that new Baptist Chapel completed." You know that he is not a Baptist, but a Congregationalist; yet he has been with us so many years that we always claim him. He added, "When it is built, I hope they will send a regular old-fashioned Baptist to preach in it." I asked him, "What sort of old-fashioned Baptist do you mean?" "Why," he replied, "the oldest-fashioned Baptist was the man that cried, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.' That is the old-fashioned sort of Baptist I mean, — John the Baptist; and that is the sort I hope will come there." "Yes," I said, "and I wish that was the sort of preacher who would go everywhere, for that is the truth which still needs to be preached." "Ah, yes!" said Mr. Rogers, "there is nothing like the doctrine of the atoning sacrifice, it is the doctrine for this world, and it is the doctrine for the next." "Do you not think," said he, "that this passage would make you a good text for to-morrow, 'These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth'?" "Yes," I answered, "that will make me a good text; may God send me the sermon!" That is why I have taken this text; it really comes to you from that venerable man who is so far advanced in years, and so close to the borders of the eternal state. He feels that the old-fashioned Baptist doctrine that ought to be continually preached is this, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," and that the best character that can be ascribed to Christians in any age is this, "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." Upon that theme I am going now to speak to you as the Holy Spirit shall enable me.

I. And, first, I would make this observation, that THIS IS

CHARACTERISTIC OF SAINTS: "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." This has always been the way of the saints; this is the way the holy prophets went, the way of the martyrs, the way of the reformers and confessors, the way of all who shall meet above around the throne of God and of the Lamb.

Begin at the beginning. When do you see Abel at his best? It is when he brings of the firstlings of his flock, and stands beside the altar of sacrifice whereon lies the God-accepted lamb? The first of the martyrs is a martyr to the doctrine of sacrifice by blood; he, being dead, yet speaketh, bearing his testimony that there is no way of access to God except by the sacrifice of a lamb.

Again I say that it is always characteristic of God's people that they follow the Lamb, for look at Israel in Egypt. They are slaves at the brick kilns, they are building treasure cities and pyramids, but they cannot stir out of Egypt till first of all they have slain and eaten the paschal lamb, and sprinkled his blood upon their dwelling-places. Then they go out singing the song of Moses the servant of God and of the Lamb. All through their marching in the wilderness, there was the offering of the morning lamb and the evening lamb. The people of God were known by their trust in a great sacrifice, that sacrifice being prefigured by "the blood of bulls and of goats, and the sprinkling of the ashes of an heifer," and especially by the passover lamb and the morning and the evening lamb.

I do not know any clearer characteristic of the saints throughout the ages that are past than this, "These are they which follow the Lamb." Think of the prophet Isaiah, and as you remember him, and his prophecy, does not the thought of the Lamb of God rise up to your mind at once? "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth."

Then, when the new saints come into the world in the brighter day, the clearer dispensation of the gospel, does not John the Baptist point all who hear him to the Lamb of God? That morning star of the Christian solar system throws its bright beams upon Jesus the one great sacrifice. John cried, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," and that other John, who heard him speak, started following the Lamb, and all through his life he kept close company with that blessed Lamb of God till, in his extreme old age, in the island of Patmos, he saw visions of God, and wrote that wonderful Book of the Revelation out of which we were reading just now; and one of the noteworthy points in that Book is that John continually speaks of the Lord Jesus as the Lamb. The one sacrifice has been offered, the redemption price has been fully paid, the sins of the redeemed have been all put away, and now one might have thought that the Lord Jesus would assume some other form, for instance, that the Lion of the tribe of Judah would always be predominant in the apocalyptic vision, yet it is not so. John says, "I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion." Sacrifice is ever first, — first before the angels, first before the elders who represent the Church, first in the very centre of the throne of God himself, for it is the throne of God, and of him who offered himself as the sacrifice, that is, the Lamb. This, then, is the emblem on the escutcheon of the church triumphant as well as the church militant, "a lamb as it had been slain." For the wilderness and for Canaan, for the battle-field and for the palace, for the cross and for the throne, it is ever the Lamb, the Lamb that was slain, and that liveth again, and liveth to die no more. God forbid that this matchless figure should ever be dim to our eyes, but may we gaze upon it with ever-increasing delight!

Saints in all ages have followed the Lamb, and I do not wonder that they have done so, for *it was the Lamb that made*

them saints. They have “washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” Sainthood begins at Calvary. There is no possibility of being holy till first there has been remission of sin; and there is no remission of sin without the shedding of the blood of the Lamb. No, dear friends, we have no hope of being clean in God’s sight unless we have been washed, and there is no fountain of cleansing for the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, but that which was opened when Christ hung on the cross. Well may they follow Christ who have been made saints by him.

They follow the Lamb, again, because *it is he who keeps them saints.* “He keepeth the feet of his saints.” If we walk in the light, as God is in the light, and so have fellowship one with another, it is still “the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son,” which “cleanseth us from all sin.” We need perpetual cleansing, and we get that perpetual cleansing in the ever-flowing stream from the wounds of Christ which, in effect, perpetually do bleed for those who put their trust in him. Well may the saints follow the Lamb, for to him they owe, not only the beginning, but the continuance of their spiritual life and saintship.

And, brothers and sisters, *what other leader could they follow?* What model, except Christ, is there for a saint to copy? How can we attain to holiness if we work not after this pattern? Where shall any manhood be seen as fit for imitation, except where it is linked with the Godhead, in the Divine Son of God? Where shall we see the law written out in living characters, but in the life of this glorious Man, this blessed Son of God? Beloved, it is not possible for saints, in all respects, to follow any other leader, and it is characteristic of them that they follow the Lamb. Ask yourselves, my dear hearers, whether you are among these followers of the Lamb.

II. The second part of our subject shows us that THIS EXPRESSION IS INSTRUCTIVE TO THOSE WHO

DESIRE TO BE SAINTS. Those of us who have already the commencement of sanctification, should remember that we can only be saints in the fullest sense by following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.

First, then, *we are to follow the Lamb*. Some men spurn the idea of following anybody; they have very capacious brains, and they like to think and to excogitate. They will have nothing but what is beaten out on their own anvils. To accept the Word of God as a little child receives it, is altogether beneath their dignity. They think that the Word of God itself is mistaken when it says, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." They fancy that their thoughts are even a little higher than the thoughts of God. They are followers of nobody, they are leaders; or, at any rate, they are "self-contained." They have their own revelation, and each man of them is a god to himself. Very well, you may stand there by yourselves, you learned people; you may have your degrees, M.A., D.D., or whatever else you like, for you are those who follow nobody; but of the true people of God, it is written, "These are they which follow the Lamb." These are not they who follow their own leading, striking out a path of their own; these are not the great eccentrics, or the wonderful originals; but these are they which follow, they are content to be merely followers; they do not aspire to be anything more than followers, but they are glad, however, to add that they are followers of the Lamb: "These are they which follow the Lamb."

There are other persons in the world who follow some one of their fellow-men. Whatever he says, is gospel to them; whatever he has written is, of course, infallible. "Be ye followers of me," says the apostle Paul, but then he adds directly, "even as I also am of Christ." While we are children, we are necessarily

under instructors; but we must take heed, as we grow in grace, that we never follow an instructor so blindly as to follow him where he goes wrong. No, “to the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them.” Every true instructor will beg you to see that, when he errs, you are not to err with him, but to keep a conscience and an understanding of your own, so that it will not be said, “These are they who follow this or that eminent preacher or divine;” but, “These are they which follow the Lamb.” Mind that, dear friends, for it is most important.

I know another company of people who follow “the church.” That is a wonderful thing, you know, “the historic church.” This is the great door of entrance into the Church of Rome, and many have been attracted to it, and have gone through it down into the abyss. There are certain persons who think that “the church” cannot err; but I do not know a more erring community than that which is commonly called “the church.” Yet there are certain people who must follow the church whithersoever she goeth; and as she has gone to Rome, there they will also go. Or if they think she has gone to Oxford, there they will abide; or if she has gone to Canterbury, there they will dwell. Well, I have great respect for these brethren, but I prefer to be numbered with those of whom it is written, “These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.” Whether he goes to Rome, or to Geneva, or to Wittenberg, or to Canterbury, or to Smithfield amidst the martyrs’ burning stakes, or amongst the misnamed Anabaptists, or the Methodists, follow the Lamb wherever he goes.

I have been sometimes called to book for saying— yet I will venture to say it again,— that, if I lived in a village, or if I lived in any other place where I knew there was a Baptist or other Dissenting Chapel, before I decided to attend it, I should want to know first, “Is the gospel preached there ?” I am not so

blindly wedded to any denomination whatever that I should cling to the denomination if it did not cleave to Christ. "Follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." If you can hear sound doctrine concerning Christ preached anywhere, go and hear it; if it is in connection with those who also follow the Lamb in the waters of baptism, show your preference for that form of worship; but do not cling merely to an old name and an old flag when Christ has gone from them. The first thing for your soul is to get near to Christ, to feed upon his truth, and so to let it be said of you, dear friends, "'These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth;'" and if they do not hear the gospel in one place, they will go to another, for they are not going to listen to false doctrine. They have, as sheep of Christ, received a taste by which they know what is truth and what is error. 'A stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers;' but when they hear their Shepherd's voice, they will follow that. "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." The church is all very well in its place, but the church has often lost her lord. In the Song of Solomon we read how she went about the streets seeking him; so I should not like to have to follow her whithersoever she goeth; but it is safe and right to follow the Bridegroom wherever he goes, so let us keep to that, and be amongst those that "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth."

A further instruction is this. *We may always follow the lead of the Lamb of the atoning sacrifice.* We can never follow it too closely in our thought. You know that you may get some one thought into your head, and it may rule your whole being till you hardly know where it may lead you. Few men know the consequences of introducing any single doctrine into their minds, for it is pretty sure to bring another and another in its train. This is especially true about the doctrine of the atonement offered by Christ the Lamb of God, yet you may accept it

without fear, whatever its consequences may be, and never be at all afraid to follow it whithersoever it goeth.

For instance, when you think of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, dying in unutterable pangs to redeem men, it gives you the true idea of the terrible blackness of sin. Well, follow out that thought; and if you begin to be greatly depressed under a sense of sin, if conscience should sting and scourge your heart, if it should almost drive you to despair to think that sin could not be put away except by the death of the Son of God, still follow out the thought, for the process will not hurt you. "Follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." Though he should lead you into a very trying experience, and a very humbling sense of your own guilt, go on still further with him, for he who leads you into that gloom will lead you out of it in the most efficient manner, and you need not be afraid to "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth."

"If it be so," says one, "that the Son of God must die before sin can be put away, then it follows that there is no salvation out of Christ." Just so, follow up that thought. Go on with it to its ultimate issues, do not be afraid, even though the consequences should startle you. Rest assured that, where the doctrine of the cross may lead you, you may follow it quite safely. One thing I know, the doctrine of the cross will never make you trifle with sin, it will never let you imagine that the death of the wicked is a slight matter, it will never make you indifferent as to the state of men when they pass into another world. "Follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth," and you will hate sin more and more, you will love souls more and more, you will have an intense awe of the law of God, and you will have an intense love for the person of your Redeemer. You cannot push this thought too far, it is a truth about which you can never go to an extreme. Nay, I wish that you would go to any extreme that lies along this route, "These are they which

follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth," as a matter of thought.

But now, once more, you may also very safely follow the Lord Jesus Christ, as the atoning sacrifice, in matters of fact; that is to say, you may be in this world, as far as you can in your measure, as Christ was. The man who believes in the doctrine of the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world, will feel that sin is bitter, and he will become very intolerant of it. He will seek to put it down, he will try to purge it out of his own conduct, and he will not endure it in his own family. Go on with that line of conduct, and follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. How can you tolerate that which cost the Son of God the bloody sweat of Gethsemane? How can you play with the dagger which pierced his heart? No, you must practically, in your life, hate the sins that made him mourn, and nailed him to the tree. Alas! nowadays, I see many who are trifling with sin. We Puritans, they say, are much too precise and too strict. Ah, sirs! it is that preciseness and that strictness that are wanted more and more, and we shall never know how to live thus except we abide hard by the cross of Christ. Unless we believe that sin cost Christ his life, we shall never have that holy enmity towards sin which we ought to have, that blessed intolerance of sin which ought to take possession of every Christian's heart and mind.

"Follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." If you do, you will have to go outside the camp, just as he did, bearing his cross. He went forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem; you will have to do the same; you will find people saying of you that they cannot endure you, you have become too religious, too strait-laced, and so on. Blessed are they who are not afraid of hard names, who indeed feel that, if it be wrong in the judgment of the world to follow Christ so closely, they intend to be more wrong, even as David said to Michal, "I will yet be more

vile." God help us so to do! "Follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth," into the place of separation without the camp.

If you follow the Lamb, you may be called to suffer, you may have to lose friends, you may come under the cruel lash of slander, you may, perhaps, have to lose this world's gains, for righteousness' sake and holiness' sake; but whatever the cost may be, follow the Lamb, say to yourself, —

*"Through floods and flames, if Jesus lead,
I'll follow where he goes."*

"The blood-bespattered footprints of my Master shall receive mine. Not with equal strides, but still with gladsome footsteps, I will follow in his track, let that track lead where it may. What he did, I will do, after my measure." This is what we ought to do, brothers and sisters. How different our lives would be if we always wrought them out by this rule— "What would Christ do in such a case?" I have sometimes got into a great fix of conscience when I have put to myself the question, "What would Christ do in such a case as this?" And once or twice I have not been able to answer, and then I have had to hark back a little, and say, "Would Christ ever have been in circumstances similar to mine just now? Is there not some mistake farther back, and had I not better go right back, and begin again, somewhere or other, rather than keep on a track in which I cannot suppose my Lord to be?" Oh, that we might feel, henceforth, that we will follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, whatever the consequences may be!

Young Christian, I should recommend you, in starting out in the Christian life, to aim at obeying your Lord's commands in every particular. If you have believed in him, the first thing that you ought to do is to be baptized. "Follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth," and I am sure that he went down into the

waters of Jordan, and was baptized by John, and then the Holy Spirit rested upon him, and his Father said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." When you have done that, go and give yourself to the Church of Christ, for the Lord Jesus Christ, from the very first, began to gather round about him those who feared God, and he had a company of disciples who constituted his Church. Still keep on following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth; and if you do, you will be a very amiable, loving, generous, hearty, self-denying, laborious Christian. If you follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, you will go about doing good; you will lay yourself out in service for the Master. Perhaps you will teach little children, for he said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not." Perhaps you will stand and preach in the streets, for he, by the hill-side, and on the mountain, and by the sea, spoke ever the things of God. But if you follow him, you will do good in one way or another, and not be a lazy lie-a-bed in the kingdom of Christ, expecting to be honoured and rewarded for doing nothing at all.

"These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." Brothers and sisters, *are we not happy that we may follow him?* His track leads to rest, for he sitteth at the right hand of God. His track Leads to victory, for the Lamb is enthroned, and he will give us to overcome, and to sit with him upon his throne, even as he has overcome, and sits with the Father upon his throne. Oh! then, by that sweet ending, let us make a good beginning, and a blessed, persevering continuance, in following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.

III. I close with this remark, — our text is **SUGGESTIVE TO ALL WHO WOULD BE SAINTS.**

You perceive that, if you are to be true saints, first of all, *you must trust Christ.* A man does not follow another unless he has faith in him. Brethren, your way to heaven lies in trusting your-

self with Christ as a sacrifice for sin, — as the Lamb of God. Trust yourself with him, and you have begun the new life, you have started as a saint.

But, next, *this trust must be of a practical kind*. It is not said in our text, “These are they which trust the Lamb” merely; but, “These are they which follow the Lamb.” You must do what he bids you, as he bids you, because he bids you, and because you trust him. You must begin, from this day forth, to show by your lives that your faith in Christ is no mere sentiment, but a vital active principle within your minds. In that way you shall find eternal life in trusting the Lamb and following him.

But, if you follow him, recollect that *you must make no terms with him*. “These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.” “Lord,” say you, “I will follow thee across the grassy lawn, or over the smoothly-rolled road.” No, no: you must make no conditions; you must follow him up the crags and down into the marshes, you must follow Christ everywhere, with no picking and choosing of the road. Where he bids you, you must go; where he leads you, you must follow. Will you do that? If so, you shall be his in the day of his appearing; but you must take that “whithersoever” into the contract. “These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.” O sir, wilt thou follow Christ at this rate? If thou wilt, thou art Christ’s man; this is the sort of soldier that he would enlist in his army, the man who is ready to follow him whithersoever he goeth. I heard of a young man who wanted to be an officer in Napoleon’s army, and he came to get a commission, wearing a fine new hat, and a suit of clothes of the very neatest cut possible; and the officer asked him, “Sir, if you were in a defile, with mountains on either side of you which you could not ascend, and there was no possibility of going back, and the enemy in front was at least ten times your number, what would you do in such a case as that?” He answered, “I should resign

my commission." They did not make an officer of him, you may be sure; but there are plenty of that kind who, as soon as ever they come to a difficulty in the Christian faith, say, "Take my name off the roll; I did not bargain for this." Now, if you mean to be a Christian, you must "follow the Lamb whithersoever—whithersoever—whithersoever he goeth."

And if you do this, *you must be like him*. Christ and his followers must be of one mind. Christ the Lamb is not to be followed by the devil's lions. If you follow the Lamb, you must grow more and more lamb-like; and that means being more gentle, more meek, more self-sacrificing, more ready to submit to the divine will. The Lord make us so, and may we be among the blessed people who shall have this for their epitaph, — nay, not for their epitaph, for they are not dead, but who shall have this for their motto, "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth"!

Lastly, remember that Jesus came to the communion table, and his followers should be like him in this respect also. If there is any child of God who has forgotten this truth hitherto, let him no longer forsake the assembling of himself with God's people in the keeping of this sacred feast. God bless you all, for Christ's sake!

Amen.

FORTY-SEVEN
THE FOLLOWERS OF THE LAMB

AUGUST 4, 1889

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 14:4-5

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 39

“These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.”

REVELATION 14:4-5.

WHATEVER the saints are in heaven, they began to be on earth. There is, no doubt, a perfection of character in the world to come; but the character must be formed here. In the next world there will be no real change; where the tree falls, there it will lie; he that is filthy will be filthy still, he that is holy will be

holy still. I am going to talk to you to-night about those who surround the Lamb, and are with him in the blaze of his glory, singing to his honour. I say that what they were in heaven they were in a measure on earth. The life of glory is the life of grace. That life which men have in heaven comes to them in regeneration on earth. When they are born again, they are born for heaven; then it is that they receive the life which lives on throughout the eternal ages. If you do not have that life here, you will never have it. If you die dead in sin, there is nothing for you for ever but the abode of the dead, "where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched." To-day is the only time which we have for character-forming. Earth is the great place for making instruments of music; here they are tuned and prepared; up there, they play them; but they will never play them there unless they have had them made and tuned here.

The subject of my discourse will be, first, *a survey of the outline of character of those who are to be with Christ hereafter a contemplation of the perfect picture of the saints with Christ in glory*, where I trust we, too, shall be, in the Lord's good time.

I do not know whether these verses describe all the saints in heaven. If they do, then you must be like them, or you can never be among them. If, however, they describe the elect of the elect, the innermost circle of heaven, if they describe the body-guard of Christ, the immortals that perpetually surround him, nearest to his person, the most divinely like him, if they describe a kind of aristocracy of the skies, the nobility of heaven,— and it seems to me that they do, for they are the first-fruits, and the rest of the righteous may be regarded as the harvest afterwards reaped,— if these words describe some special saints, then we should seek to be like them. I would cultivate a holy ambition to be among the brightest stars of God. Why should we not reach to the highest prize of our high

calling? If there be any speciality among the redeemed above, should it not be our earnest desire to attain to that standard?

I. So, first, here is AN OUTLINE OF THE CHARACTER OF THOSE BLESSED ONES WHILE THEY ARE HERE.

And, first, notice *their adherence to the doctrine of sacrifice* while they are here: "These are they which follow *the Lamb*." There are some professing Christians who talk much about the example of Christ, but deny the efficacy of his atoning blood; they are not of those who will be in heaven. There are some who magnify the philosophy of Christ; all his ethical teaching is greatly to their taste; but, as to his being a Substitute offered up as a sacrifice on account of human guilt, they cannot away with it. Very well; they cannot enter heaven, for "these are they which follow *the Lamb*

Many have thus followed the Lamb in spite of fierce persecution. Remember that brave woman, Ann Askew. When they had racked her, and pulled every limb out of its place, so that she ached all over in her exquisitely delicate frame, yet she sat on the stone floor of her cell, and still defended the sacrifice of Christ. When she had an opportunity to write her thoughts, she penned that quaint verse,—

*"I am not she that list,
My anchor to let fall,
For every drizzling mist;
My ship's substantial."*

She thought that being vexed by Popish priests and torn to pieces on the rack was only a drizzling mist, for which it was not worth while to cast her anchor. She was more than a match for fifty priests. God raise us up a race of such men and women!

The devil seems to have taken the backbone out of most people. May we begin to know what we do know, and to believe what we do believe, and to put our foot down, and say, "God helping me, I will not forsake my God, nor turn away from his truth." You remember how Martin Luther, when he stood at the Diet of Worms, closed what he had to say when they bade him recant, and he would not. He said, "Here I stand; I can do no other, so help me God;" and thus, invoking the help of his divine Lord, he committed his body to the flames, if need be, sooner than he would renounce a single Word of the Most High, or sin against the light which he had received.

And, next, it is clear of these people that they followed the Lamb by practically imitating Christ's example, for it is written, "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." They so believed in him that—

*"They mark'd the footsteps that he trod,
His zeal inspired their breast,
And following their incarnate God,
Possess the promised rest."*

You cannot be with Christ unless you are like Christ. If you have really trusted in Jesus, he will transform you, he will take away from you those evil tendencies and vile propensities which are contrary to holiness, he will work in you to will and to do of his own good pleasure. And the highest holiness for you is to be like Christ. The very noblest possible character to which you could ever reach is to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, in obedience to God, in love to man, in self-sacrifice, in humility, in gentleness, in love. You must follow him whithersoever he goeth, and do what he did, so far as your position makes it fit for you to do it. I mean that you cannot do as he did as God, but you can do what he did as man. Try to put your

feet down in the footprints that he has left you. Do aim at complete conformity to Christ; and wherein you fail to reach it, mark that you come so far short of what you ought to be. To be like Christ is that which God intends for you; and unless you have some measure of it now, you will never be with him, for all they who are with Christ above are the people who were made like to Christ here below. Note that very distinctly, "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth."

Will you, dear friends, labour to take Christ for your pattern? Do not come and take his name, and then dishonour his character. There are among you some who are very much like your Master; you are the joy of the church. There are among all the churches some who bear Christ's name, but are not like him. My venerable predecessor, Dr. Rippon, used to say of his church that he had in it some of the best people in England; and then he used to add in a low voice, "and some of the worst." I am afraid that I have to say the same; but I am very sorry that I should have to say it. The worst people in the world are those who profess most and do least. Do not be among that unhappy number; but do, I pray you, by the blessing of God, and the help of his Spirit, be among those who at least endeavour to "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth."

Now, notice in the sketch of these people that they recognized a special redemption: "These were redeemed from among men." Christ had done something for them that he had not done for others. They were not redeemed "among men", but "from among men" They recognized the speciality of Christ's sacrifice. They could read, for instance, a passage like this, and understand its meaning, "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it," for his church, for his body. "These were redeemed from among men." Come, beloved, do you belong to this company of persons who have been fetched out from the rest of mankind by the power of the Spirit of God, and also by

the merit of the precious blood? Do you feel that you are marked with the blood as others are not? Do you belong to a people who are not of the world, even as he that bought them was not of the world? Are you henceforth not of the common multitude, but one who has been bought and paid for by that redemptive price which was found in the veins and the heart of the Redeemer, and are you so redeemed as no longer to be one of the great mass of mankind, but fetched out, called out, chosen, “not your own, but bought with a price”? These are they that will be with Christ hereafter, as specially redeemed ones.

And as they recognized a special redemption, you will observe that they made a full surrender of themselves to God and to the Lamb: “These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.” On a certain day, when the harvest was getting ripe, a man went down to the fields, and plucked an ear here, a handful there, and another handful further on, and he passed along the field, and gathered ears here and ears there, and when he had collected enough for sheaves, he tied them up, and took them to the temple of God, and presented them to the Lord as an offering, to signify that he owed all the harvest to God, and he brought him the first ripe ears as a sacrifice to him. Now, beloved, has the grace of God plucked you out from among the rest of mankind, and do you feel that now you belong to Christ, that you belong to God, that you are not to be gathered with the mass of men for the great condemnation, but that you are presented unto God, and belong to him altogether? It is a very easy thing for me to talk about this; but, believe me, it is by no means an easy thing to carry it out. I see numbers of people who profess to belong to God; but they live as much for money-making as anybody else, they live quite as much for self-seeking as the world does; and it would be difficult, even if

you had microscopes on both your eyes, to see any difference between them and worldlings. This will never do. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing." If you are the firstfruits unto God, be so; if you belong to yourself, serve yourself; but if, by the redemption of Christ, you are not your own, but bought with a price, then live as those who are the King's own, who must serve God, and cannot be content unless their every action shall tend to the divine glory, and to the magnifying of Christ Jesus. Now this is what all of us who are truly the Lord's have in outline. Oh, that the sketch might be properly filled up, that we might become more the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb!

I must take you a little further. These people who are to be with Christ, the nearest to him, are a people free from falsehood. "In their mouth was found no guile." Brethren, if we profess to be Christians, we must have done with all craft, policy, double-dealing, and the like. The Christian man should be a plain man, who says what he means, and means what he says. I know of no worse suspicion against any man who professes to be a Christian than the suspicion of not being transparent. It were better for us to be simple as fools than to be cunning as hypocrites, even though our cunning should place us in the front rank of the governors of mankind. The Christian man should scorn to tell a lie; exaggeration and equivocation should be strangers to his lips. "In their mouth was found no guile." The Lord Jesus Christ was a great speaker of plain truth; and those whom he chooses to be near him, to be his personal attendants in heaven, must also be free from guile. "With many a mistake, with many a weakness, yet, beloved, the saints are free from falsehood. They are true, whatever may be their mistakes. Look to yourselves, and see whether it is so; as I would look to my own soul, I charge you to look to yours.

And then, once more, it is said that they are free from blemish

Thus much upon the outline of the character of saints while they are upon the earth.

II. Now indulge me for just a few minutes while I try to give you A GLIMPSE OF THE PERFECT PICTURE IN HEAVEN.

I Cannot really show you the picture; that is in the upper gallery in glory, and you must go up there to see it. I can only tell you my idea of what that picture is like when it is finished.

Well, first, those who are with Christ enjoy perfect fellowship with him. Up there, they "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." They are always with him. There were certain young princes chosen in certain courts to attend upon the king. Wherever the king went, they went; where the court was, there was their abode; their one business was to behold the king's face, and to abide near him. That is the business of the glorified ones of whom I am speaking. When will the day arrive that you and I shall enjoy this perfect fellowship with our glorious King, never absent from him, never doubting his love, never cold in our affection towards him, but being—

"For ever with the Lord"?

Shall I go on with the verse?

"Amen! so let it be!

Life from the dead is in that word,

'Tis immortality!"

Some of you have dear children who have outstripped their mother, and are enjoying this felicity even now. Others of us have mothers, brothers, friends who were very dear to us, who follow the Lamb in glory. How many who once sat amongst us

here are now up there, following the Lamb, and he leads them unto living fountains of waters, and all tears are wiped away from their eyes! Oh, to think that wherever my Lord shall go I shall go! When he shall descend from heaven with a shout, we shall come with him. When he shall sit upon his throne to judge the world, his saints shall sit with him. When he shall reign amongst his ancients gloriously for a thousand years, we shall reign with him on the earth. When he shall return to the Father's throne,—

“All his work and warfare done,”

we shall partake of his triumph, following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. I vote to cast in my lot with my Lord in life and in death; what say you? My Master, where thou dwellest, I will dwell; if men put thee to shame, I will be put to shame with thee; if thou diest, I will die with thee, that I may for ever live with thee in thy glory above. Say you not the same, beloved? Say it deep down in your heart to-night.

Well, now, notice in this complete picture, next, that up there they are perfectly accepted with God: “These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.” God always accepts them; he always looks upon them as his firstfruits, bought with his Son's blood, and brought by his Son into his heavenly temple, to be his for ever. Sometimes here we mar our service; but they never mar it there. Our songs get out of tune, but theirs never know a discord. We praise the Lord, and yet groan, being burdened; but in heaven there are—

*“No groans to mingle with the songs
Which warble from immortal tongues.”*

We doubt; we fear; we grieve the Holy Spirit; sometimes we get very sadly out of gear with God. It is never so there;

fully redeemed from sin, they are accepted in the Beloved, and to the very top of their bent they know it, and enjoy it. Happy day, happy day, when you and I shall be of them and among them!

Observe, also, that they have perfect truth there in heart and soul: "In their mouth was found no guile." "No lie," says the Revised Version. Here, dear friends, we do fall into error inadvertently, and sometimes, I fear me, negligently. We say, not knowingly, more than the truth. How often we say much less than the truth, and almost necessarily so when we speak of divine things; but up there they are not only free from wilful guile and deceit, but they are free from all error and mistake. Happy day! Happy day! Do you not long to be there to be rid of every false doctrine, every wrong opinion, every error, every mistake, so that in your mouth there shall never be guile again? This is what they are above, made perfect. He who washed their hearts here has washed their tongues there. As they loved the truth here, they know the truth there. As they sought it here, they have found it there. As they were willing to die for it here, they live in the enjoyment of it there, and shall do so for ever.

One more feature of that perfect picture is this, they enjoy perfect sinlessness before God: "They are without fault before the throne of God." That text brings back to my recollection the second sermon I preached to this church, one Sabbath evening, when we were but few: "They are without fault before the throne of God." I had great joy, as a youth, in expatiating upon the perfect blessing of being altogether "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." If there were any fault in them there, they are where it would be seen, for they are before the throne of the all-seeing God; but even there, in that matchless place of light in which there is no darkness at all, they are declared to be without fault, without blemish. Can you think that you will be

of that happy number one day? I had to put it very mildly just now when I spoke of saints being without blame here; but you may put it as strongly as you please when you speak of their being without sin there. They were once, perhaps, before conversion, the very chief of sinners; but in heaven there shall be no trace of their sin. They will bless the grace that came to them when they were up to their neck in the filth of sin; but there will be no trace of their filthiness left. There is no blood stain on Manasseh, there is no brand of blasphemy on Saul of Tarsus now; they have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Some of these men were by nature and by practice, too, so depraved that it looked as if they could never escape from their evil habits. We might have said of them, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may these men, who are accustomed to do evil, learn to do well." Yet so has the grace of God changed them, that there is no trace of any evil tendency, no propensity to lust, or lewdness, or blasphemy, or any kind of fault.

What a wonderful change it will be for those who were once great sinners to be found without fault; not only without great crime, not only without gross vice, but without fault, and that, too, as I have said, before the throne of God, where, if there were a fault, it would be seen! They are cleansed from all the guilt of sin, and from all the depravity which the habitude of sin brings to men. "They are without fault before the throne of God." Truly, if you had never heard this before, it might make you laugh for joy to think that it should ever be possible that the very chief of sinners, through faith in Christ, might be made so clean as one day to be without fault before the throne of God. I do think that, when we get there, part of the joy of heaven will be a long surprise, an endless wonder; and if we are permitted there to recollect what we used to be, some of you will recall a night of sin, and say, "And yet I am here." You will

recall, perhaps, some dreadful passion, some atrocious outburst of foul language, or some terrible occasion of sin, and you will say, "Yet here am I, clean as the driven snow, washed in the blood of Jesus, and renewed by the Spirit of God." Although they always praise God, I think that they must every now and then have a fresh outburst of hallelujahs when they begin to review the past. One says, "I, even after conversion, was a poor, limping Christian, and I was thrown back once or twice with terrible backslidings. My Christian friends despaired of my ever holding on; and yet here I am, without fault before the throne of God. Hallelujah!" Will not a man be obliged to break out like that, and do you not think that all the saints around him will take up the Hallelujah, too, till it goes in swelling chorus all round the choirs of heaven, "Hallelujah to God and the Lamb"? And another one will say, "And I, after I had long known the Lord, fell, oh, so sadly, so grievously! But he would not give me up, he followed me; and by his mighty grace, I was restored, my broken bones were set again, and I was made to sing of free grace and forgiving love. He created in me a new heart, and renewed a right spirit within me; and now I, even I, am here without fault, without a single fault." You can hardly imagine it, can you? You begin to think, "Well, surely that cannot be," for, if you look within, you see so many faults over which you groan; but you will look without and look within, when you once get there, and neither without nor within, in any respect whatever, will you have any kind of fault; for "they are without blemish before the throne of God."

I do not feel inclined to preach any more, but just to shout, "Hallelujah," again and again, at the very thought that I shall be there. Oh, it is hard to go to heaven from such a place as that which I occupy! Your eyes sometimes startle me in my dreams, these thousands of eyes fixed upon one poor mortal man, who has to try to lead you to Christ, and lead you to heaven. Your

eyes at times seem to pierce me like so many daggers. I think, sometimes, “What if I am not faithful, if I do not preach plainly, if I do not warn them, if I do not invite them earnestly, if I do not with all my heart cry, ‘Come to Christ’? What shall I do in eternity if six thousand pairs of eyes are for ever seeming to stick, like daggers, into my heart?” Oh, but it will not be so! I believe in him that justifieth the ungodly; and I have fully preached him to you, and all my great congregation. My hope is in the precious blood that cleanseth from all sin; and I have pointed all my hearers to that precious blood; and the day will come when I, with all who believe in Jesus, shall be without fault before the throne of God.

The very thought of it makes me cry “Hallelujah,” and with that I finish. Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Say “Hallelujah,” all of you.

[“Hallelujah” from the congregation.]

Hallelujah! Hallelujah to God and the Lamb! The Lord bless you, for Christ’s sake!

Amen.

FORTY-EIGHT
A VOICE FROM HEAVEN

JANUARY 1, 1970

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 14:12,13

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 21

“Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.”

REVELATION 14:12-13.

THE text speaks of a voice from heaven which said, “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.” The witness of that voice is not needed upon every occasion, for even the commonest

observer is compelled to feel concerning many of the righteous that their deaths are blessed. Balaam, with all his moral short-sightedness, could say, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." That is the case when death comes in peaceful fashion. The man has lived a calm, godly, consistent life; he has lived as long as he could well have wished to live, and in dying he sees his children and his children's children gathered around his bed. What a fine picture the old man makes, as he sits up with that snowy head supported by snowy pillows. Hear him as he tells his children that goodness and mercy have followed him all the days of his life, and now he is going to dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. See the seraphic smile which lights up his face as he bids them farewell, and assures them that he already hears the harpers harping with their harps, — bids them stay those tears, and weep not for him but for themselves — charges them to follow him so far as he has followed Christ, and to meet him at the right hand of the Judge in the day of his appearing. Then the old man, almost without a sigh, leans back, and is present with the Lord.

*"Heaven waits not the last moment; owns her
friends
On this side death, and points them out to men;
A lecture silent but of sovereign power!
To vice, confusion — and to virtue peace."*

Even the blind bat's-eyed worldling can see that "blessed are the dead which die in the Lord" in such a fashion as that, nor is it difficult to perceive that this is the case in many other instances. We have ourselves known several good men and women who were afraid of death, and were much of their lifetime subject to bondage, but they went to bed and fell asleep and never woke again in this world, and as far as appearances

go they could never have known so much as one single pang in departure, but fell asleep among mortals to awake amid the angels. Truly, such gentle loosings of the cable, such fordings of Jordan dry shod, such ascents of the celestial hills with music at every step, are beyond measure desirable, and we need no voice out of the excellent glory to proclaim that blessed are the dead who in such a case die in the Lord.

But that was not the picture which John had before his mind. It was quite another — a picture grim and black to mortal eye. The sounds which meet the ear are not those of music, nor the whispered consolations of friends, but quite the reverse; all is painful, terrible, and the very opposite of blessed, so far as strikes the eye and ear. Hence it became needful that there should be a voice from heaven to say, “Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord.” I will give you the picture. The man of God is on the rack. They are turning that infernal machine with all their might; they have dragged every bone from its place; they have exercised their tortures till every nerve of his body thrills with agony. He is flung into a dark and loathsome dungeon, and left there to recover strength enough to be led in derision through the streets. Upon his head they have placed a cap painted with devils, and all his garments they have bedizened with the resemblance of fiends and flames of hell. And now, with a shaveling priest on each side holding up before him a superstitious emblem, and bidding him adore the Virgin or worship the cross, the good man, loaded with chains, goes through the street, say of Madrid or Antwerp, to the place prepared for his execution. “An act of faith,” they call it — an *auto da fe* — and an act of heroic faith it is indeed when the man of God takes his place at the stake, in his shirt, with an iron chain about his loins, and is fastened to the tree, where he must stand, and burn “quick to the death.” Can you see him as they kindle the faggots beneath him, and the flames begin to

consume his quivering flesh till he is all ablaze and burning — burning without a cry, though fiercely tormented by the fire? Now assuredly is that voice from heaven wanted, and you can hear it, “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord,” — blessed even when they die like this. “Here is the patience of the saints,” and, in the esteem of angels and of glorified spirits, such a death may under many aspects be adjudged to be more blessed than the peaceful deathbed of the saint who had some fellowship with Jesus, but was not so made to drink of his cup, and to be baptised with his baptism, as to die a painful and ignominious death as a witness for the truth. It must have been a dreadful thing to watch the rabble rout hurrying to Smithfield, to stand there and see the burning of the saints. It would have been a more fearful thing still, if possible, to have been in the dungeons of the Low Countries and seen the Anabaptists put to death in secret. In a dungeon dark and pestilential there is placed a huge vat of water, and the faithful witness to Scriptural baptism is drowned, drowned for following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, drowned alone where no eye could pity, and no voice from out of the crowd could shout a word of help and comfort. Men hear only the coarse jests of the murderers who have given the dipper his last dip, but the ear of faith can hear ringing through the dungeon the voice, “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.” True, through the connection of their names with a fanatic band, these holy ancestors of ours have gained scant honour here, yet their record is on high; blessed they are, and blessed they shall be. Wheresoever on this earth, whether among the snows of Piedmont’s valleys or in the fair fields of France, saints have died by sword or famine, or fire or massacre, for the testimony of Jesus, because they would not bear the mark of the beast either in their forehead or in their hand, this voice is heard sounding out of the third heavens, “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.”

It matters not, my brethren, where they die who die in the Lord. It may be that they have not the honour of martyrdom in man's esteem, but yet are witnesses for the Lord in poverty and pain. Here is the patience, and here also is the blessedness of the saints. Yonder poor girl lies in a garret, where the stars look between the tiles, and the moon gleams on the ragged hangings of the pallet where she bravely suffers and, without a murmur, gradually dissolves into death. However obscure and unknown she may be, she has been kept from the great transgression; tempted sorely, she has yet held fast her purity and her integrity; her prayers, unheard by others, have gone up before the Lord, and she dies in the Lord, saved through Jesus Christ. None will preach her funeral sermon, but she shall not miss that voice from heaven, saying, "Write, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord."

We repeat it, it matters not when you die nor in what condition; if you are in the Lord, and die in the Lord, right blessed are ye.

Now, it is quite certain that very soon every one of us must leave this world. We know that we are no more immortal than our fellow men. Though by a sad piece of imposition upon ourselves we count all men mortal but ourselves, right surely mortal we are, and pass away out of this world each one of us shall, in due time. The saints themselves must die, though to them death is far other than to sinners. It is greatly wise to be ready for our undressing, prepared for the sweet sleep in Jesus; and if we are not in Christ, it is all the more imperative upon us to consider our latter end, that we rush not forward in the dark. I therefore want, for a few minutes only, to disengage your mind from the too abundant snares of this world, and the thralldom of human cares, that you may look across the border into the great future so surely yours, perhaps so nearly yours. Oh, that you might be helped to prepare for that future, that by

such preparation, through divine grace, you may be numbered among the blessed who die in the Lord.

First, we shall briefly describe their character, then mention the rest which constitutes their blessedness, and conclude by meditating upon the reward, which is a further part of that blessedness.

I. First, then, let us describe THE CHARACTER. "Here is the patience of the saints." To be blessed when we die we must be saints. By nature we are sinners, and by grace we must become saints if we would enter heaven; for it is the land of saints, and none but saints can ever pass its frontiers. Since death does not change character, we must be made saints here below if we are to be saints above. We have come to misuse the term "saint," and apply it only to some few of God's people. What means it but this — holy? Holy men and holy women — these are saints. It is not Saint Peter and Saint John merely; you are a saint, dear brother, if you live unto the Lord; you are a saint, my sister, however obscure your name, if you keep the Lord's way, and walk before him in sincere obedience. We must be saints, and in order to be this we must be renewed in spirit, for we are sinners by nature; we must, in fact, be born again. All unholy and unclean, we are by nature nothing else but sin; and we must be created anew by the power of the eternal Spirit, or else holiness will never dwell in us. Our loves must be changed, so that we no longer love evil things, but delight only in that which is true, generous, kind, upright, pure, godlike. We must be changed in every faculty and power of our nature by that same hand which first made us, and across our brows must be written these words, "Holiness unto the Lord."

The word saint denotes not merely the pure in character, but those who are set apart unto God, dedicated ones, sanctified by being devoted to holy uses — by being, in fact, consecrated to God alone. My dear hearer, do you belong to God?

Do you live to glorify Jesus? Can you honestly put your hand on your heart, and say, "Yes, I belong to him who bought me with his blood, and I endeavour by his grace to live as he would have me live. I am devoted to his honour, loving my fellow-men and loving my Lord, endeavouring to be like unto him in all things"? You must be such, for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

"But how am I to attain to holiness?" You cannot rise to it save by divine strength. The Holy Spirit is the Sanctifier. Jesus who is our justifier is also made unto us sanctification, and if we by faith lay hold on him, we shall find in him all that we want. Let this be a searching matter with every one here present, as I desire to make it with myself, and may God grant we may be numbered with the saints!

But the glorified are also described in our text as patient ones, — "Here is the patience of the saints," or, if you choose to render it differently, you may lawfully do so — "Here is the endurance of the saints." Those who are to be crowned in heaven must bear the cross on earth. "No cross, no crown," is still most true. Many would be saints if everybody would encourage them; but as soon as a hard word is spoken they are offended. They would go to heaven if they could travel there amidst the hosannas of the multitude, but when they hear the cry of "Crucify him, crucify him," straightway they desert the man of Nazareth, for they have no intention to share his cross, or to be despised and rejected of men. The true saints of God are prepared to endure scoffing, and jeering, and scorning; they accept this cross without murmuring, remembering him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself. They know that their brethren who went before "resisted unto blood, striving against sin," and as they have not yet come to that point, they count it foul scorn that they should be ashamed or confounded in minor trials, let their adversaries do what they

may. Those who are to sing Christ's praise in heaven must first have been willing to bear Christ's shame below. Numbered with him in the humiliation must they be, or they cannot expect to be partakers with him in the glory. And now, dear brethren and sisters, how is it with us? Are we willing to be reproached for Christ's glory? Can we bear the sarcasm of the wise? Can we bear the jest of the witty? Are we willing to be pointed at as Puritanic, punctilious and precise? Do we dare to be singular when to be singular is to be right? If we can do this by God's grace, let us further question ourselves. Could we endure this ordeal if its intensity were increased? Suppose it came to something worse — to the thumbscrew or the rack, could we then bear it? I sometimes fear that many professors would cut a sorry figure if persecuting times should come; for I observe that to be excluded from what is called "society" is a great grievance to many modern Christians. When they settle in any place, their enquiry is not, "Where can I hear the gospel best?" but "Which is the most fashionable place of worship?" And the question with regard to their children is not "Where will they have Christian associations?" but "How can I introduce them to society?" — introduction to society frequently being an introduction to temptation, and the commencement of a life of levity. Oh, that all Christians could scorn the soft witcheries of the world, for, if they cannot, they may be sure that they will not bear its fiery breath when, like an oven, persecution comes forth to try the saints. God grant us grace to have the patience of the saints; that patience of the saints which will cheerfully suffer loss rather than do a wrong thing in business; that patience of the saints which will pine in poverty sooner than yield a principle though a kingdom were at stake; that patience of the saints which dreads not being unfashionable if the right be reckoned so; that patience of the saints which courts no man's smile, and fears no man's frown, but can endure all

things for Jesus' sake, and is resolved to do so. "Can you cleave to your Lord when the many turn aside? Can you witness that he hath the living word, and none upon earth beside?" Can you watch with him when all forsake him, and stand by him when he is the butt of ribald jest and scorn, and bear the sneer of science, falsely so called, and the politer sarcasm of those who say they "doubt," but mean that they utterly disbelieve? Blessed is that preacher who shall be true to Christ in these evil days. Blessed is that church-member who shall follow Christ's word through the mire and through the slough, o'er the hill and down the dale, caring nothing so that he can but be true to his Master. This must be our resolve. If we are to win the glory we must be faithful unto death. God make us so! "Here is the patience of the saints" — it cometh not by nature; it is the gift of the grace of God.

Farther on these saints are described as "they that keep the commandments of God." This expression is not intended for a moment to teach us that these people are saved by their own merits. They are saints to begin with, and in Christ to begin with, but they prove that they are in Christ by keeping the commandments of God. Let us search ourselves upon this matter. Brethren and sisters, we cannot hope to reach the end if we do not keep the way. No man is so unwise as to think that he would reach Bristol if he were to take the road to York. He knows that to get to a place he must follow the road which leads thither. There is a way of holiness in which the righteous walk, and this way of obedience to the Lord's commands must and will be trodden by all who truly believe in Jesus, and are justified by faith; for faith works obedience. A good tree brings forth good fruit. If there be no fruit of obedience to God's commands in you, or in me, we may rest assured that the root of genuine faith in Jesus Christ is not in us at all. In this age the keeping of Christ's commandments is thought to be of very little conse-

quence. It is dreadful to think how Christians in the matter of the law of God's house do not even pretend to follow Christ and his appointments. They join a church, and they go by the law of that church, though that church's rule may be clean contrary to the will of Christ; but they answer to everything, "That is our rule, you know." But then who has a right to make rules for you or for me, but Christ Jesus? He is the only legislator in the kingdom of God, and by his commands we ought to be guided. I should not, I could not, feel grieved if brethren arrived at contrary conclusions to mine, I being fallible myself; but I do feel grieved when I see brethren arrive at conclusions, not as the result of investigation, but simply by taking things just as they find them. Too many professors have a happy-go-lucky style of Christianity. Whichever happens to come first they follow. Their fathers and mothers were this or that, or they were brought up in such and such a connection, and that decides them; they do not pray, "Lord, show me what thou wouldst have me to do." Brethren, these things ought not so to be. Has not the Master said, "Whosoever shall break one of the least of these my commandments, and teach men so, the same shall be least in the kingdom of heaven"? I would not stand here to condemn my fellow Christians for a moment; in so doing I should condemn myself also, but I plead with you, if you do indeed believe in Jesus, be careful to observe all things whatsoever he hath commanded you, for he has said, "If ye abide in me, and my words, abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you;" and again, "If ye love me keep my commandments."

A worldlyling once said to a puritan, "When so many great make rents in their consciences, cannot you make just a little nick in yours, for peace sake?" "No," said he, "I must follow Christ fully." "Ah, well," you say, "these things are non-essential." Nothing is non-essential to complete obedience: it may be

non-essential to salvation, but it is selfishness to say, "I will do no more than I know to be absolutely necessary to my salvation." It is essential to a good servant to obey his master in all things, and it is essential for the healthiness of a Christian's soul that he should walk very carefully and prayerfully before the Lord, else otherwise he will miss the blessing of them of whom it is said, "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." To be blessed in death we must keep the commandments of God.

The next mark of the blessed dead is, that they kept "the faith of Jesus." This is another point upon which I would speak thunderbolts, if I could, for to keep the faith of Jesus is an undertaking much ridiculed now-a-days. "Doctrines!" says one, "we are tired of doctrines."

*"For forms and creeds let graceless bigots fight,
He can't be wrong whose life is in the right."*

The opinion is current that to be fluent and original is the main thing in preaching, and provided a man is a clever orator it is a proper thing to hear him. The Lord will wither with the breath of his nostrils that cleverness in any man which departs from the simplicity of the truth. There is a gospel, and "there is also another gospel which is not another, but there be some that trouble you." There is a yea yea, and there is a nay nay; and woe unto those whose preaching is yea and nay, for it shall not stand in the great day when the Lord shall try every man's work of what sort it is. Search ye, my brethren, and know what the gospel is, and when you do know it, hold it: hold it as with a hand of iron, and never relax your grasp. Grievous wolves have come in among us, wolves of another sort to what were wont to be in the churches, yet, verily, after the same fashion they come disguised in sheep's clothing. They use our very terms and

phrases, meaning all the while something else; they take away the essentials and vitalities of the faith, and replace them with their own inventions, which they brag of as being more consistent with modern thought and with the culture of this very advanced and enlightened age, which seems by degrees to be advancing, half of it to Paganism with the Ritualists, and the other half of it to Atheism with the Rationalists. From such advances may God save us! May we be enabled to keep the faith, and uphold the truth which we know, by which also we are saved. I, for one, cannot desert the grand doctrine of the atoning blood, the substitutionary work of Christ, and the truths which cluster around it. And why can I not desert these things? Because my life, my peace, my hope, hang upon them. I am a lost man if there be no substitutionary sacrifice, and I know it. If the Son of God did not die, "the just for the unjust, to bring us to God," I must be damned; and therefore all the instincts of my nature cling to the faith of Jesus. How can I give up that which has redeemed my soul, and given me joy and peace and a hope hereafter? I beseech you, do not waver in your belief, but keep the faith, lest ye be like some in old time, who "made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience," and were utterly cast away. Woe unto those who keep not the doctrines of the gospel, for in due time they forget its precepts also and become utterly reprobate. In departing from Christ men forsake their own mercies both for life and death. The blessed who die in the Lord are those who "keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus."

Notice, that these people continue faithful till they die. For it is said, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." Final perseverance is the crown of the Christian life. "Ye did run well; what did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" Vain is it to begin to build, we must crown the edifice or all men will deride us. Helmet and plume, armour and sword, are all

assumed for nothing unless the warrior fights on till he has secured the victory.

Those who thus entered into rest, exercised themselves in labours for Christ. For it is said, "They rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." The idle Christian can have little hope of a reward; he who serves not his Master can scarcely expect that his Master will at the last gird himself and serve him. If I address any here who are not bringing forth fruit unto God, I can say no less than this, "Every tree that bringeth not forth fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." The rule is invariable. It must be so. If there be no works and no labours for Christ, no suffering or patient endurance, we lack the main evidence of being the people of God at all.

To close this description of character, these people who die in the Lord were in the Lord. That is the great point. They could not have died in the Lord if they had not lived in the Lord. But are we in the Lord? Is the Lord by faith in us? Dear hearer, are yon resting upon Jesus Christ only? Is he all your salvation and all your desire? What is your reply to my enquiry? You are not perfect, but Jesus is. Are you hanging upon him as the vessel hangs upon the nail? You cannot expect to stand before God with acceptance in yourself, but are you "accepted in the beloved"? That is the question — "accepted in the beloved." Are you in Christ, and is Christ in you by real vital union, by a faith that is the gift of God and the work of the Holy Spirit in your soul? Answer, I charge you, for if you cannot answer these things before one of your own flesh and blood, how will you answer in your soul when the Lord himself shall come?

II. So much with regard to the character. And now a very few words with regard to THE BLESSEDNESS which is

ascribed to those who die in the Lord. "They rest from their labours."

By this is meant that the saints in heaven rest from such labours as they performed here. No doubt they fulfil service in heaven. It would be an unhappy heaven in which there should be nothing for our activities to spend themselves upon. But such labours as we can do here, will not fall to our lot there. There we shall not teach the ignorant, or rebuke the erring, or comfort the desponding, or help the needy. There we cannot oppose the teacher of error, or do battle against the tempter of youth. There no little children can be gathered at our knee and trained for Jesus, no sick ones can be visited with the word of comfort, no backsliders led back, no young converts confirmed, no sinners converted. They rest from such labours as these in heaven.

They rest from their labours in the sense that they are no longer subject to the toil of labour. Whatever they do in heaven will yield them refreshment and never cause them weariness. As some birds are said to rest upon the wing, so do the saints find in holy activity their serenest repose. They serve him day and night in his temple, and therein they rest. Even as on earth by wearing our Lord's yoke we find rest unto our souls so in the perfect obedience of heaven complete repose is found.

They rest also from the woe of labour, for I find the word has been read by some "they rest from their wailing." The original is a word which signifies to beat, and hence, as applied to beating on the breast it indicates sorrow; but the beating may signify conflict with the world, or labour in any form. The sorrow of work for Jesus is over with all the blessed dead. Naught to that place approacheth their sweet peace to molest; they shall no more say that they are sick, neither shall adversity afflict them.

Their rest is perfect. I do not know whether the idea of rest

is cheering to all of you, but to some of us whose work exceeds our strength it is full of pleasantness. Some have bright thoughts of service hereafter, and I hope we all have, but to those who have more to do for Christ than the weary brain can endure, — the prospect of a bath in the ocean of rest is very pleasant.

They rest from their labours. To the servant of the Lord it is very sweet to think that when we reach our heavenly home we shall rest from the faults of our labours. We shall make no mistakes there, never use too strong language or mistaken words, nor err in spirit, nor fail through excess or want of zeal. We shall rest from all that which grieves us in the retrospect of our service. Our holy things up there will not need to be wept over, though now they are daily salted with our tears. We shall there rest from the discouragements of our labour. There no cold-hearted brethren will damp our ardour, or accuse us of evil motives; no desponding brethren will warn us that we are rash when our faith is strong, and obstinate when our confidence is firm. None will pluck us by the sleeve, and hold us back, when we would run the race with all our might. None will chide us because our way is different from theirs, and none will foretel disaster and defeat when we confidently know that God will give us the victory. We shall also rest from the disappointments of labour. Dear brother ministers, we shall not have to go home, and tell our Lord that none have believed our report. We shall not go to our beds sleepless because certain of our members are walking inconsistently, and others of them are backsliding, while those that we thought were converted have gone back again to the world. Here we must sow in tears: there we shall reap in joy. There we shall wear the crown, or rather cast it at the Master's feet; but here we must plunge deep into the sea to fetch up the pearls from the depths that they may be set in the diadem. Here we labour, there we shall enjoy the

fruits of toil, where no blight or mildew can endanger the harvest.

It will be a sweet thing to get away to heaven, I am sure, to rest from all contentions amongst our fellow Christians. One of the hardest parts of Christ's service is to follow peace, and to maintain truth at the same time. He is a wise chemist who can in due proportions blend the pure and the peaceable; he is no mean philosopher who can duly balance the duties of affection and faithfulness, and show us how to smite the sin and love the sinner — to denounce the error, and yet to cultivate affection for the brother who has fallen into it. We shall not encounter this difficulty in yon bright world of truth and love, for both we and our brethren shall be fully taught of the Lord in all things. We shall be free from the clouds and mists of doubt which now cover the earth, and clear of the demon spirits which seek to ruin men's souls beneath the shadow of deadly falsehood. Blessed be God for this prospect! It will be joy indeed to meet no one but a saint, to speak with none but those who use the language of Canaan, to commune with none but the sanctified. Truly blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, if they reach to such a rest as this.

*"To this our labouring souls aspire,
With ardent pangs of strong desire."
"Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O
Jerusalem."*

III. The last matter for our consideration is THE REWARD of the blessed dead: — "They rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." They do not go before them, they have a forerunner infinitely superior to their works, for Jesus and his finished work have led the way. "I go," says he, "to prepare a place for you." In effect he says to us,

"Not your works, but mine; not your tears, but my blood; not your efforts, but my finished work shall lead the van." Where then do our works come? Do they march at our right hand or our left as subjects of cheering contemplation? No, no, we dare not take them as companions to comfort us: they follow us at our heel; they keep behind us out of sight, and we ourselves in our desires after holiness always outmarch them. The Christian should always keep his best services behind, always going beyond them, and never setting them before his eyes as objects for congratulation. The preacher should labour to preach the best sermons possible, but he must never have them before him so as to cause him, in self-satisfaction, to say, "I have done well;" nor should he have them by his side, as if he rested in them, or leaned upon them, for this were to make antichrists of them. No, let them come behind: that is their proper place. Believers know where to put good works; they do not despise them, they never say a word to depreciate the law, or undervalue the graces of the Holy Spirit, but still they dare not put their holiest endeavours in the room of Christ. Jesus goes before, works follow after.

Note well, that the works are in existence and are mentioned: immortality and honour belong to them. The works of godly men are not insignificant or unimportant as some seem to think. They are not forgotten, they are not as the sere leaves of last year's summer; they are full of life, and bloom unfadingly; they follow the saints as they ascend to heaven, even as the silver trail follows in the wake of the vessel. I pictured just now a man burning at the stake; his enemies thought they had destroyed his work, but they only deepened its hold upon the age in which he suffered, and projected his influence into the effect for ages to come. They made a pile of his books, and as they blazed before his eyes they said, "There is an end of you and your heresies." Ah, what fools men have been! Truth is not

vanquished with such weapons, nay, nor so much as wounded. Think of the case of Wycliffe, which I need not repeat to you. They threw his ashes into the brook, the brook carried them to the river, and the river to the sea, till every wave bore its portion of the precious relics, just as the influence of his preaching has been felt on every shore. Persecutors concluded beyond all question that they had made an end of a good man's teaching when they had burned him, and thrown away his ashes, but they forgot that truth often gathers a more vigorous life from the death of the man who speaks it, and books once written have an immortality which laughs at fire. Thousands of infidel and heathen works have gone, so that not a copy is to be found: I hope they never may be unearthed from the salutary oblivion which -entombs them: but books written for the Master and his truth, though buried in obscurity are sure of a resurrection. Fifty years ago our old Puritan authors, yellow with age, and arrayed in dingy bindings, wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, destitute, afflicted, tormented, but they have been brought forth in new editions, every library is enriched with them, the most powerful religious thought is affected by their utterances, and will be till the end of time. You cannot kill a good man's work, nor a good woman's work either, though it be only the teaching of a few children in the Sunday-school. You do not know to whom you may be teaching Christ, but assuredly you are sowing seed which will blossom and flower in the far off ages. When Mrs. Wesley taught her sons, little did she think what they would become. You do not know who may be in your class, my young friend. You may have there a young Whitfield, and if the Lord enable you to lead him to Jesus, he will bring thousands to decision. Ay, at your breast, good woman, there may be hanging one whom God will make a burning and a shining light; and if you train that little one for Jesus your work will never be lost. No holy tear is forgotten, it is

in God's bottle. No desire for another's good is wasted, God has heard it. A word spoken for Jesus, a mite cast into Christ's treasury, a gracious line written to a friend — all these are things which shall last when yonder sun has blackened into a coal, and the moon has curdled into a clot of blood. Deeds done in the power of the Spirit are eternal. Therefore, "Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

Good works follow Christians, and they will be rewarded. The rewards of heaven will be all of grace; but there will be rewards. You cannot read the Scripture without perceiving that the Lord first gives us good works, and then in his grace rewards us for them. There is a "Well done, good and faithful servant," and there is a proportionate allotment of reward to the man who was faithful with five talents and the man who was faithful with two. You who live for Jesus, may be quite certain that your life will be recompensed in the world to come. I repeat it, the reward will not be of debt, but of grace, but a reward there will be. Oh, the joy of knowing, when you are gone, that the truth you preached is living still! Methinks the apostles since they have been in heaven must often have looked down on the world, and marvelled at the work which God helped twelve poor fishermen to do, and they must have felt a growing blessedness as they have seen nations converted by the truth which they preached in feebleness. What must be the joy of a pastor in glory to find his spiritual children coming in one by one! Methinks, if I may, I shall go down to the gate and linger there to look for some of you. Ay, not a few shall I welcome as my children there, blessed be the name of the Lord; but what a joy it will be! You, teachers — you my good sister, who have brought so many to Christ — I cannot but believe that it shall multiply your heaven to see your dear ones entering it. You will have a heaven in every one of those whose feet you guided

thither, you will joy in their joy, and praise the Lord in their praise. No, no, the good old cause shall never die, and the truth shall never perish. As I have lately read many hard things that have been spoken against the gospel, and as in going up and down throughout this land I have seen the nation wholly given to idolatry, I have felt something of the spirit of the Pole who wherever he wanders says to himself, "No, Poland, thou shalt never perish!" Despite the darkness and ill-savour of the times, the gospel nears its triumph. It can never perish. Great men may fall, great reputations may grow obscure, grand philosophies may be cast into the shade, monstrous infidelities may win popularity, and old superstitions may come back again to darken us; but thy cross, Emmanuel, thy pure and simple gospel, the faith our fathers loved and died for, must continue to be earth's brightest light — her day-star, till the day dawn and the shadows flee away. The vessel of the church can never be wrecked; she rocks and reels in the mad tempest, but she is sound from stem to stern, and her pilot steers her with a hand omnipotently wise. Her bow is in the wave, but see she divides the sea, and shakes off the mountainous billows, as a lion shakes the dew from his mane! Fiercer storms than those of the present have beat upon her, and yet she has kept her eye to the wind, and in the very teeth of hell's tremendous tempests she has ploughed her glorious way: and so she will till she reaches her appointed haven. The Lord liveth and the Lord reigneth, and Christ from the tree has gone to the throne — from Gethsemane and Golgotha up to the glory; and all power is given unto him in heaven and in earth. We have nothing to do but to go on preaching the gospel and baptising in his name, according to his bidding; and the day shall come when the might with the right and the truth shall be, and the right hand of Jesus with the iron rod shall break his adversaries, and reward his friends. The Lord own every one of us as being on his side; and if we are not

on that side, oh, that we may speedily become so by repentance and faith! May the Lord turn us, and we shall be turned; for if “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord,” depend upon it, cursed are they that die out of Christ — ay, cursed with a curse, and their works shall follow them or go before them, unto judgment, to their condemnation. May infinite mercy save us from being howled at by our works in the next world, save us from being hunted down by the wolves of our past sins, risen from the dead; for, except we are forgiven, our transgressions will rise from the grave of forgetfulness, and gather around us, and tear us in pieces, and there shall be none to deliver.

May we fly even now to Jesus, and through faith in his blood be delivered from all evil that we also may have it said of us, “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.”

The Lord bless you for Christ’s sake.

Amen.

FORTY-NINE
THE HARVEST AND THE VINTAGE

SEPTEMBER 17, 1876

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 14:11-20

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 50

“And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped. And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power

over tire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cost it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.”

REVELATION 14:11—20.

I AM no prophet, nor the son of a prophet; neither do I profess to be able to explain all the prophecies in this blessed Book. I believe that many of them will only be explained as the events occur which they foretell. Yet there are some things which are plain even to the most superficial reader. It is plain, for instance, that it is certainly foretold that the power of antichrist shall be utterly and eternally destroyed, and that Babylon, that is to say, the Papal system, with all its abominations, shall be cast like a millstone into the flood, to rise no more for ever. It is also certain that the Jews, as a people, will yet own Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of David, as their King, and that, they will return to their own land, “and they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations.” It is certain also that our Lord Jesus Christ will come again to this earth, and that he will reign amongst his ancients gloriously, and that there will be a thousand years of joy and peace such as were never known on this earth before. It is also certain that

there will be a great and general judgment, when all nations shall be gathered before the Son of man sitting upon the throne of his glory; and his final award concerning these upon his left hand will be, These shall go away into everlasting punishment;" and concerning those upon his right hand, "but the righteous into life eternal."

How all these great events are to be chronologically arranged, I cannot tell. This I know, — for I have read a multitude of books upon this subject, and of making them there is practically no end, — all the authors seem to me to be wonderfully wise in confuting one another, but not to be so successful in establishing their own theories. Therefore am I content to believe what I see to be clearly taught in the Scriptures, and to leave to abler minds than my own the arrangement of the various events in some sort of historical sequence. This, however, seems to me to be clearly revealed in the Scriptures, that there is to come, somewhen, — we know not when, — a solemn winding up of all the events of this world's history. Whatever else may happen, or may not happen, the apostle Paul plainly declared that God "hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." Even though we cannot comprehend some things that are foretold by John, or Isaiah, or Daniel, or Ezekiel, we know that "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment;" and that "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Judgment must certainly come, even to the house of God, for Peter says that there it shall begin; and if it shall begin there, "what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?"

That there will be a day of judgment, appears to be clear

even to human reason; for, apart from revelation, or, perhaps, assisted by some dim relics of it, all nations — I think I may say all, for no exceptions are known to me, — have believed in a judgment. They have called it by different names, and they have described it in various ways, but they have all believed, more or less clearly, in a great throne of justice, before which wrongs will be rectified, sin will be punished, and righteousness will be rewarded. This has seemed so self-evident, even to the crudest thoughts of the lowest of mankind, that, in some shape or other, the most benighted nations have believed it; and it strikes one, at once, as being most reasonable, for, in this world, how often does infamy triumph! How often is oppression linked with power to destroy innocence and virtue! What are the groans, and sighs, and wailings that I hear, and what the tears that I see, but the outbursts of men who are being crushed beneath the awful burden of lifelong injustice? The best of men are, all too often, trodden down as the very mire of the street, while the worst are sitting proudly in the high places of the earth. If there be a God at all, — and we know that there is, — there must be a time and a way of rectifying all this in another state; and so there is, as David says, “Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth;” and, therefore, verily there must be a time of judgment for the ungodly, even common reason seems to teach us that.

Moreover, there is, within us all, a conscience, which Shakespeare says “does make cowards of us all” and well I ween that it may do so, since we have all sinned and turned from the path of right. Let man do what he will with that conscience, — unless there be an extraordinary restraint put upon it, — it bears testimony to the great fact that the judgment is coming on apace. We have known men stifle or silence this voice till they have come to a sick-bed, or have been at sea in a

storm; yet why have they been so alarmed at the approach of death? Death itself is not to be feared, but it is —

*“The dread of something after death, —
The undiscover’d country, from whose bourn
No traveller returns,”*

that makes a man cling even to an ignominious and shameful life rather than hurry himself, all unprepared, before the bar of God. Men who have, when in health, denied this, have, as they have lain dying, proved that they believed it by the cold clammy sweat that has stood upon their brow at the very thought of passing into the spirit world. They have known that there is a God, — a God who must do right, — and knowing that they have done wrong, they have been afraid to fall into the hands of the living God.

But we are not left to the faint taper of human reason, or to the flickering candle of conscience; we have the full sunlight of divine revelation. Our Lord Jesus Christ himself has told us, in divers ways, sometimes by parable, and sometimes by plain speech, that there is a day assuredly coming in which all mankind shall stand before his bar; and the apostle John, in the visions which we are about to consider, had a view, not exactly of the judgment itself, but of a parable or picture of that judgment. May the Holy Spirit help us to look into it with divinely-opened eyes, and may he graciously impress the truth concerning the judgment upon all our hearts!

Before we consider my main subject, let me call your attention to what John says about, the coming of the Judge: “I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.”

Observe then, first, *the Judge’s throne*. On that great judg-

ment day, he will come sitting upon a cloud. What can this metaphor mean? Surely it must mean that his judgment-seat will be far more glorious than the thrones of mere mortal monarchs. They may sit upon thrones of ivory; they may exalt themselves upon thrones made of gold, and bedecked with myriads of gems shining like the eyes of the morning, or the stars of the midnight sky; but their thrones can never be compared in splendour with the judgment seat of Christ. A great white throne shall come sailing along the sky, and on it shall sit the King of kings, and Lord of lords, the Judge of all, who has the right to sit in judgment, whose decisions will be impartial and infallible, and whose sentences will assuredly be carried out. He asks not for any throne that this world could supply; he borrows no leave to judge from Parliament, or Pope, or prince. He is Judge by divine right, as himself God, and as the Mediator, appointed by God to judge the quick and the dead.

His mysterious throne is also said to be “a white cloud.” The word expresses, not so much the colour of whiteness, as the dazzling brilliancy of a white substance, — dazzling because of its perfect purity. A throne as of alabaster shall that white cloud be to him, — a throne as of transparent glass, pure as crystal, — a throne that shall be without spot or blemish, — a throne whose judgment no bribe can ever influence, — a throne concerning which it may be said that the Judge seated there ne’er fears the face of man or devil, nor will he ever do any man or devil an injustice, but will “lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet.”

The Judge’s throne, then, shall be unique for its splendour and unearthly purity; and he will be seated upon a cloud, which will be so elevated in the sky that all can see it. If Christ were to be seated upon a throne set up at Jerusalem or at Rome, only a part of the world’s vast population would be able to

behold him; but, on that tremendous day, there, shall be an audience-chamber large enough to hold the quick and the dead of all climes and all times, and Christ shall be there, above them all, “and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.” So, on some calm summer evening, as the sun has been setting, have I seen a cloud, wafted by the wind in the very face of the sun, and the sun has shone upon it, lighting it up with such glory as heaven’s pencil alone could give; and I have said to myself, “So shall it be in that clay when the Son of man shall appear, seated upon a white cloud as his last throne of judgment.”

Now turn your eye, for a little while, from the Judge’s throne to *his person*: “upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man.” And well may John say “like unto the Son of man,” for it is none but he: THE Son of man.” Man has had many sons, but no other like this “Son of man.” He is the truest man who ever lived, — the most manly of all men, — the only one in whom manhood has reached its perfection; and, in that day, every eye shall see that, though he is “very God of very God,” yet is he also just as truly man. They shall behold the nail-prints in his hands and his feet, and the marks of the spear-thrust in his side, and they shall see that it is even he whom they called “the Nazarene”, and whom wicked men nailed to the cross of Calvary. It is HE who shall come to judge the quick and the dead, — the gentle Jesus, “meek and lowly in heart” still, full of love, and abundant in mercy, for those attributes can never depart from our Lord Jesus Christ; yet they will be consistent with the sternest justice and the most unflinching administration of the law of God. It will go ill, in that day, with those who have despised the Lamb of Calvary, for they shall find that he is also “the Lion of the tribe of Judah.” None are more terrible in justice than those who are tender in mercy.

Bring to me the gentlest spirit that ever lived, and begin to tell the tale of the Bulgarian massacres, and I will warrant you that, in proportion to the tenderness will be the indignation. They, who have no heart, cannot display real indignation; but where there beats a true heart of love, there must be righteous wrath against that which is unloving, holy anger against that which is unjust and true. So shall it be with him who will sit upon the white cloud. With a perfectly balanced mind, calm and absolutely impartial, gentle, yet terrible, he will sit upon that throne of spotless purity, "and every eye shall see him." My eyes shall see him, and your eyes shall see him, and the eyes of everyone who has been born of woman shall see him in that day.

We have glanced at the Judge's throne, and at his person; now let us note *his adornments*. John mentions that he saw "on his head a golden crown." That is to signify that he is a Sovereign; and, indeed, as I have already reminded you, he is King of kings, and Lord of lords, and he is to be the Judge of all by virtue of his divine authority and power. How different it will be to see him with a crown of gold upon his head from what it was to see him wearing that terrible crown of thorns which the cruel soldiers plaited, and thrust upon his brow! The word used here does not usually refer to the diadem of power, but to the crown won in conflict; and it is very remarkable that it should be said that, when Christ comes to judge the world, he will wear the garland of victory, the crown which he has won in the great battle which he has fought. How significant of his final triumph will that crown of gold be about those brows that were once covered with bloody sweat when he was fighting the battle for our salvation! As his saints catch a glimpse of that fillet of gold, they will remember his victorious words, "It is finished;" and the very sight of that golden crown will fill their hearts with ineffable joy and delight, for they will recollect that he triumphed on the cross for them, and that he has vanquished

all their foes, and now he has come to claim them as the reward of his struggles, and the spoils of his victory.

Give one more look at the Judge upon his throne, and you will see that he carries "in his hand a sharp sickle" or reaping-hook. This is his sceptre, and it signifies that he has come to finish his last great work, which will be sharp, swift, and decisive. When he came to fight the battle of truth, "out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword;" but now it is hand-work rather than mouth-work with him. There will be no ministry of mercy now, no further proclamation of the gospel; but, with a sharp sickle, Christ will come to reap. The sowing time will be over, and the reaping time will have come. What a sight that will be! "For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth." On that last tremendous day, when the earth will be rocking and reeling to and fro in terror at his coming, there will be a fulfilment of that verse in the last chapter of this Book: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly: and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."

I. Now follow me while we look, first, at THE HARVEST, and may the Spirit of God render these great truths exceedingly impressive to us! The first thing to be done, at the coming of the Lord, is to gather to himself his own people, — the wheat which he himself sowed, the precious grain which he watered with his bitter tears and his bloody sweat: "Another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe."

Notice that *this reaping comes first*, and I think it comes *first in order of time*. If I read the Scriptures aright, there are to

be two resurrections, and the first will be the resurrection of the righteous; for it is written, "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power." Sometimes, in Scripture, the resurrection of the just and of the unjust is represented as taking place simultaneously; and, at other times, they are represented as having an interval of a thousand years between the two; yet a thousand years are but as one day to God, and it may be that the whole period is included in the day of judgment. Still, it strikes me that we have sufficient warrant from Scripture to say that, in the order of time, the harvest comes before the vintage, as Paul says, "The dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord." After that, I gather that he will come to judge and to condemn the wicked.

But, certainly, if not first in order of time, it is here put *first in order of importance*, for it is the ingathering of the wheat to which Christ specially looks forward; it is this on which his soul is set with ardent longing. Judgment is his strange work, his left-handed work; but "he delighteth in mercy," and he will put this work first when he comes to "judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth." He has such regard for his saints that "when he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them." His eye is ever fixed upon them; and even on the day of judgment, the great event to Christ shall be the clearing of the righteous from every accusation that may be brought against them, the complete and final justification of as many as have believed in Jesus.

We can see, from reading this passage, that those to be left, after the righteous are gathered in, are very clearly indicated. In

this world, in the present state, there is a mixture of good and bad. Here, the tares and the wheat grow close together in the same field; and, as a general rule, no man can tell the tares from the wheat. If any of us were to try to root up the tares, we should be almost sure to root up the wheat also. But, in that day, the righteous and the wicked will be easily distinguished from one another. Nobody ever mistook: an ear of wheat for a cluster of grapes; and when Christ comes, the distinction between the righteous and the wicked will be as clearly manifest as between a field of wheat in the time of harvest and a vineyard when the grapes are ripe. It is plainly declared that, in that day, God's wheat will be ripe for the heavenly garner: "Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe" When the Lord Jesus comes, every child of God will be found to be ripe for heaven. There is a great deal of greenness and sourness in us while we are in the blade and in the ear; but when we are dried, — as the word might be translated, — when the wheat has become mellowed by the ripening influences of autumn, — then shall we be as sweet, ripe corn for the Lord of the harvest to gather into his garner. Some of you do not feel very ripe at present; but you may rest assured that you will not be harvested until you are fully ripe. The Lord will not reap one ear of his corn green; and he has a secret way of preparing his people for heaven when he has prepared heaven for them. The righteous will be perfectly ripe in that day: "The time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe."

Notice, also, that they are all to be gathered in, and that this great task is to be accomplished by the crowned King himself. I want that fact to be specially noted by you, so let me again read the 16th verse: "And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped." With the golden crown upon his brow, he that is like unto the Son of man will

stoop from his throne of cloud, and reap his saints, — gathering them all to his bosom at one glorious sweep of his strong right arm. It does not say that Christ will send an angel to do this reaping. His love to his chosen is so great that he will not entrust this task to any angel, but will do it all himself. He alone knows how much that ripe corn has cost him. Those precious souls were espoused unto him from eternity, and they were redeemed by him with his own heart's blood. They are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones; so he gathers them unto himself, and does not think it is beneath his dignity himself to be the reaper of this golden grain. Do you not delight in that thought, — you who love the Lord? Does not your heart rejoice in knowing that, in that great day when you stand like ripe corn, Christ shall come, sitting upon a white cloud, and having on his head a golden crown, and, with the sharp sickle in his hand, he will gather you unto himself with the glad joy of the reaper? It is another metaphor that we find in the Book of Malachi, but it has the same meaning: "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." None can tell, not even those who have had the greatest sympathy with Christ in the sowing, what will be his joy in the reaping; and what shall be our joy, too, when we enter into the joy of our glorified Lord. The harvest, even on earth, is a happy time; hear how the reapers sing and shout as they carry the golden sheaves into the garner; but what rejoicing and what shouting there will be when we, as shocks of corn fully ripe, are taken home to the heavenly garner! Well did we sing, just now, in anticipation of that last harvest home,

"Hallelujah!

Welcome, welcome, Son of God!"

May you and I, dear friends, all be garnered amongst the wheat in that great harvest day!

II. Now, for a little while, we must have the very heavy task of looking at THE VINTAGE.

The vintage represents the destruction of the wicked: "And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle." You see, it is not the crowned Christ who comes to do this work of judgment, but an angel. "And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe." I want to speak to you very calmly, yet very solemnly, about this last vintage, because it may concern some of you. If you do not escape from the wrath to come, it *must* concern you, — awfully and terribly concern you.

Notice, first, that *this vintage comes after the harvest*. As I have told you, I think it will be so in the order of time. After Christ shall have gathered his saints unto himself, then shall he summon the wicked to appear before his judgment seat. Then shall follow their terrible condemnation; and even if it is not second in the order of time, it will be second in the order of importance. Dreadful as is their doom, our Lord Jesus Christ does not look upon that as the principal event of that last great day. His own words are, "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." As I said before, the wicked will be clearly distinguished from the righteous in that day. Nobody will mistake them then. They may be mistaken here, for they may go to the same place of worship, they may sing the same hymns,

and in many respects they may be like the children of God. We may easily mistake tares — such tares as Christ mentioned, — for blades of wheat; but again I remark that there is no possibility of mistaking a cluster of grapes for an ear of corn. So, in that day, there will be no way of evading the Judge's infallible judgment; there will be no miscarriage of justice before the bar of God.

Observe, next, that *the condemnation of the ungodly is called for by the angel of fire*: “another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire.” Ah, me! what meaneth this? Hath God appointed some holy spirits to watch over the instruments of terror with which, he will execute the fierceness of his wrath? Was that the angel, “which had power over fire,” who launched the thunderbolts in Egypt on that dread night when the firstborn in all the land were slain unless they were sheltered under the sprinkled blood? Was that the angel, “which had power over fire,” who smote the hosts of Sennacherib? Was that the angel, “which had power over fire,” who opened the furnaces of hell, and caused fire and brimstone to descend on guilty Sodom and Gomorrah? It may be so, and that this same angel shall come forward, at the last, to demand that justice shall be executed upon those who have despised God, and rejected Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.

It appears also, from the parable, that *the wicked will be fully ripe for punishment*. That is a very strong expression in the 18th verse: “Gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; *for her grapes are fully ripe*” The righteous are said to be ripe; some of them, perhaps, only just ripe; but the wicked are fully ripe, for sin has a wonderfully ripening effect upon men. They add iniquity unto iniquity until they have filled up the measure of it. The Greek word, used here, means that they have-reached their *acme*, — they have come to the highest point of sin. Are any of you here fully ripe? Why, methinks that one sin makes a

man ripe for judgment; but to go on, year after year, despising Christ, and rejecting his gospel, must make man what we call “dead ripe.” When a man goes on to profanity, and blasphemy, and infidelity, surely he must be “fully ripe.” So will all be in that great day of the gathering of the vintage of woe; and, just as the clusters of the vine cannot resist the force of the hand that plucks them, or the sharp knife that cuts them off, so shall the wicked, in that day, be utterly defenceless, hopeless, and helpless; and he, that reaps them with his sharp sickle, shall find no difficulty in cutting them all off. Again I remind you that it will not be Christ who will do this work; an angel will do it, not the crowned King seated on the white cloud. They would not have anything to do with him, so he will have nothing to do with them, except to deliver them over to the angel that hath power over fire, and his brother executioner. What a terrible sight that judgment will be! As John looked upon it in his vision, I feel sure that his very bones must have trembled, and the marrow in them must have melted, as he saw that angel, with his sharp sickle, quickly reap all the clusters of the vine of the earth, and cast them into the great winepress of the wrath of God. O sinner, this is but a faint picture of the doom of the lost, yet the picture itself is too terrible for me to *try to* describe or explain it! What will happen, in that great day, when you shall be reaped, and cast into the great winepress of the wrath of God; — or, as it may be read, “the great winepress of an angry God”? Ask thyself, my hearer, this solemn question, “Shall I ever be cast into that great winepress?” If thou dost continue to reject the mercy of Christ, what else can happen to thee?

Note, further, that *this winepress* is “*without the city*” — not in the New Jerusalem, — not in heaven, — but “without the city.” That reminds us of another winepress, or olivepress, which was “without the city,” and which was called Gethsemane, where he, who shall, by-and-by, be seated on the white

cloud, himself suffered oven unto agony and bloody sweat. These people would not plead his sufferings on their own account; they would not have him to reign over them, and therefore they must go into the great winepress of the angry God. Perhaps, in that dread day, if any of you are there, — which may God in mercy prevent! — you will remember that wondrous passage, in the prophecy of Isaiah, in which Christ says, “I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me;” and, as you would not have the salvation which he wrought out in that winepress, you must be cast into the great, winepress of the wrath of God.

“And the winepress was trodden without the city.” This represents the awful suffering of lost souls, the eternal punishment that will then begin. And, as the red juice spurts from the trodden grapes, so did John, in his terrible vision, see the blood of men come flowing forth, “even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.” That metaphor and measurement are meant to show how terrible is the wrath of God against the ungodly. Perhaps someone here says, “That is too terrible a theme to talk about.” Then, what must it be to endure it? Somebody will cavil at my words upon this awful topic. Nay, sir, cavil at the Scriptures, not at me. I do not explain the idea, but I tell you what John saw in vision. “It was only a vision,” says someone. I know it was, but the reality will be far more terrible. There can be no possible exaggeration of the wrath of God. I beseech you, my dear hearers, — though I know not, and never wish to know, much about this dreadful subject, — remember that what we do. know about the doom of the lost is enough to make one’s hair stand on end, and one’s heart almost to cease to beat; so, I beseech you, do not risk that doom for yourselves. Escape for your lives; look not behind you; but fly to the one refuge which God has provided. Whosoever will entrust his soul to Jesus Christ shall be eternally saved.

Look unto him who wore the thorn-crown, and repose your soul's entire confidence in him, and then, in that last great day, you shall see him seated on the white cloud, wearing the golden crown, and you shall be gathered, with the wheat, into his garner. But if you reject him, do not think it wrong that you should be cast with the grapes into the winepress of the wrath of God, and be trodden with the rest of "the clusters of the vine of the earth." I beg you to take Christ as your Saviour, this very hour; lest this night you should die unsaved. Lay hold of Jesus, lest you never hear another gospel invitation or warning. If I have seemed to speak terribly, God knoweth that I have done it out of love to your souls; and, believe me, that I do not speak as strongly as the truth might well permit me to do, for there is something far more terrible about the doom of the lost than language can ever express or thought conceive. God save all of you from ever suffering that doom, for Jesus Christ's sake!

Amen.

REVELATION 15

FIFTY
ISRAEL IN EGYPT

SERMON GIVEN ON JUNE 14, 1857

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 15:3

FROM: NEW PARK STREET PULPIT VOLUME 3

*"And they sing the song of Moses the servant of
God, and the song of the Lamb, saying,
Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord
God Almighty; just and true are thy ways,
thou King of saints."*

REVELATION 15:3

At the outset, let us remark the carefulness of the Holy Spirit in guarding the honor of our blessed Lord. This verse is often quoted as if it runs thus—"They sang the song of Moses and the Lamb." This mistake has led many weak minds to wonder at the expression, for they have imagined that it divided the honor of the song of heaven between Moses and the Redeemer. The clause—"the servant of God"—is doubtless inserted by the Holy

Spirit to prevent any error upon this point, and therefore it should be carefully included in the quotation. I take it that the song of Moses is here united with the song of the Lamb, because the one was a type and picture of the other. The glorious overthrow of Pharaoh in the Red Sea shadowed forth the total destruction of Satan and all his host in the day of the great battle of the Lord; and there was in the song of Moses the expression of the same feelings of triumph which will pervade the breasts of the redeemed when they shall triumph with their Captain.

May God the Holy Spirit enable me to exhibit the parallel which exists between the condition of Israel when passing through the sea, and the position of the church of Christ at the present day. Next, we shall compare the triumph of the Lord at the Red Sea with the victory of the Lamb in the great and terrible day of the Lord. And lastly, I shall point out certain prominent features of the song of Moses, which will doubtless be as prominent in the song of the Lamb.

I. First, it is our business to regard THE POSITION OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL AS EMBLEMATICAL OF OUR OWN. And here we observe that, like the church of God, the vast host of Israel had been delivered from bondage. We, my brethren, who constitute a part of the Israel of God, were once the slaves of sin and Satan; we served with hard bondage and rigor while in our natural state; no bondage was ever more terrible than ours; we indeed made bricks without straw, and labored in the very fire; but by the strong hand of God we have been delivered. We have come forth from the prison-house; with joy we beheld ourselves emancipated—the Lord's free men. The iron yoke is taken from our necks; we no longer serve our lusts, and pay obedience to the tyrant sin. With a high hand and an outstretched arm, our God has led us

forth from the place of our captivity, and joyfully we pursue our way through the wilderness.

But with the children of Israel it was not all joy; they were free, but their master was at their heels. Pharaoh was loth to lose so valuable a nation of servants; and therefore with his chosen captains, his horsemen, and his chariots, he pursued them in angry haste. Affrighted Israel beheld her infuriated oppressor close at her rear, and trembled for the issue—the hearts of the people failed them while they saw their hopes blighted and their joys ended by the approach of the oppressor; even so it is with some of you; you think you must be driven back again like dumb cattle, into Egypt, and once more become what you were. "Surely," you say, "I can not hold on my way with such a host seeking to drive me back; I must again become the slave of my iniquities." And thus dreading apostacy, and feeling that you would rather die than become what you were, you this morning are filled with trepidation. You are saying, "Alas for me! Better that I had died in Egypt than that I should have come out into this wilderness to be again captured." You have tasted for a moment the joys of holiness and the sweets of liberty; and now again to go back to endure the bondage of a spiritual Egypt, would be worse than before. This is the position of the sacramental host of God's elect; they have come out of Egypt, and they are pursuing their way to Canaan. But the world is against them; the kings of the earth stand up, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his people, saying, "Let us scatter them; let us utterly destroy them." From the fiery days of the stakes of Smithfield even until now, the world's black heart has hated the church, and the world's cruel hand and laughing lip have been for ever against us. The host of the mighty are pursuing us, and are thirsty for our blood, and anxious to cut us off from the earth. Such is our position unto this hour, and such must it be until we are landed

on the other side of Jordan, and until our Maker comes to reign on the earth.

But once more: the children of Israel were in a position more wonderful than this. They came to the edge of the Red Sea; they feared their enemies behind; they could not fly on either hand, for they were flanked by mountains and stupendous rocks; one course only was open to them, and that course was through the sea. God commands them to go forward. The rod of Moses is outstretched, and the affrighted waters divide; a channel is left while the floods stand up right, and the waters are congealed in the heart of the sea. The priests, bearing the ark, march forward; the whole host of Israel follow. And now behold the wondrous pilgrimage. A wall of alabaster is on either side, and myriads are in the pebbly depths. Like a wall of glass the sea stands on either side of them, frowning with beetling cliffs of foam; but still on they march; and until the last of God's Israel is safe the water stands still and firm, frozen by the lips of God. Such, my hearers, is the position of God's church now. You and I are marching through a sea, the floods of which are kept upright only by the sovereign power of God. This world is a world which is suddenly to be destroyed; and our position in it is just the position of the children of Israel, for whose sake the floods refused to meet until they were safely landed. O church of God! thou art the salt of the earth: when thou art removed this earth must putrify and decay. O living army of the living God! ye, like Israel, keep the floods of providence still standing fast; but when the last of you shall be gone from this stage of action, God's fiery wrath and tremendous anger shall dash down upon the ground whereon you now are standing, and your enemies shall be overwhelmed in the place through which you now walk safely. Let me put my thoughts as plainly as I can. Naturally, according to the common order, the Red Sea should have flowed on in a level and even manner,

constant in its waves, and unbroken in its surface. By the might of God the Red Sea was divided into two parts, and the floods stood back. Now mark. Naturally, according to the common course of justice, this world, which groaneth and travaileth until now, ought, if we only consider the wicked, to be utterly destroyed. The only reason why the Red Sea afforded a safe passage for the host was this—that Israel marched through it; and the only reason why this world stands, and the only reason why it is not destroyed by fire, as it is to be at the last great day, is because God's Israel are in it; but when once they shall have passed through, the parted floods shall meet their hands, and embrace with eager joy to clasp the adverse host within their arms. The day is coming when this world shall reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man. Every Christian may say, with due reverence to God, "The earth is dissolved; I bear up the pillars thereof." Let all the Christians that are in the world die, and the pillars of the earth would fall, and like a wreck and a vision all this universe of ours would pass away, never to be seen again. We are to-day, I say, passing through the floods, with enemies behind, pursuing us who are going out of Egypt up to Canaan.

II. And now the TRIUMPH OF MOSES was a picture of the ultimate triumph of the Lamb. Moses sang a song unto the Lord by the sea of Egypt. If you will turn to Holy Scripture you will find that my text was sung by the holy spirits who had been preserved from sin and from the contamination of the beast; and it is said that they sung this song upon "a sea of glass mingled with fire." Now the song of Moses was sung by the side of a sea, which was glassy, and still; for a little season the floods had been disturbed, divided, separated, congealed, but in a few moments afterward, when Israel had safely passed the flood, they became as glassy as ever, for the enemy had sunken to the bottom like a stone, and the sea returned to its strength when

the morning appeared. Is there ever a time, then, when this great sea of Providence, which now stands parted to give a passage to God's saints shall become a level surface? Is there a day when the now divided dispensations of God, which are kept from following out their legitimate tendency to do justice upon sin—when the two seas of justice shall commingle, and the one sea of God's providence shall be "a sea of glass mingled with fire?" Yes, the day is drawing nigh when God's enemies shall no longer make it necessary for God's providence to be apparently disturbed to save his people, when the great designs of God shall be accomplished, and therefore when the walls of water shall roll together, while in their inmost depths the everlasting burning fire shall still consume the wicked. O, the sea shall be calm upon the surface; the sea upon which God's people shall walk shall seem to be a sea that is clear, without a weed, with-out an impurity; while down in its hollow bosom, far beyond all mortal ken, shall be the horrid depths where the wicked must for ever dwell in the fire which is mingled with the glass.

Well, I now want to show you why it was that Moses triumphed, and why it is that by-and-by we shall triumph. One reason why Moses sung his song was because all Israel were safe. They were all safely across the sea. Not a drop of spray fell from that solid wall until the last of God's Israel had safely planted his foot on the other side of the flood. That done, immediately the floods dissolved into their proper place again, but not till then. Part of that song was, "Thou hast led thy people like a flock through the wilderness." Now, in the last time, when Christ shall come upon earth, the great song will be—"Lord, thou hast saved thy people; thou hast led them all safely through the paths of providence, and not one of them has fallen into the hands of the enemy." O, it is my strong belief, that in heaven there shall not be a vacant throne. I rejoice that

all who love the Lord below, must at last attain to heaven. I do not believe with some that men may start on the road to heaven, and be saved, and yet fall by the hand of the enemy. God forbid, my friends!

*"All the chosen race
Shall meet around the throne,
Shall bless the conduct of his grace,
And make his glories known."*

Part of the triumph of heaven will be, that there is not one throne that is unoccupied. As many as God hath chosen, as many as Christ hath redeemed, as many as the Spirit hath called, as many as believe, shall arrive safe across the stream. We are not all safely landed yet:

*"Part of the host have crossed the flood,
And part are crossing now."*

The vanguard of the army have already reached the shore. I see them yonder.

*"I greet the blood-besprinkled bands
Upon th' eternal shore."*

And you and I, my brethren, are marching through the depths. We are at this day following hard after Christ, and walking through the wilderness. Let us be of good cheer: the rearguard shall soon be where the vanguard already is; the last of the chosen shall soon have landed; the last of God's elect shall have crossed the sea, and then shall be heard the song of triumph, when all are secure. But oh! if one were absent—oh! if one of his chosen family should be cast away—it would make an

everlasting discord in the song of the redeemed, and cut the strings of the harps of Paradise, so that music could never be distilled from them again.

But, perhaps, the major part of the joy of Moses lay in the destruction of all the enemies of God. He looked upon his people the day before.

*"He looked upon his people,
And the tear was in his eye;
He looked upon the foeman
And his glance was stern and high."*

And now to-day he looks upon his people, and he says, "Blessed art thou, O Israel, safely landed on the shore;" and he looks not upon the foeman, but upon the foeman's tomb; he looks where the living were protected by the shield of God from all their enemies; and he sees—what? A mighty sepulcher of water; a mighty tomb in which were engulfed princes, monarchs, potentates. "The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." Pharaoh's chariots also are drowned therein. And soon, my hearers, you and I shall do the same. I say that now we have to look abroad on hosts of enemies. What with the wild beasts of Rome, what with the antichrist of Mohammed, what with the thousands of idolatries and false gods, what with infidelity in all its myriad shapes, many are the enemies of God, and mighty are the hosts of hell. Lo, you see them gathered together this day; horseman upon horseman, chariot upon chariot, gathered together against the Most High. I see the trembling church, fearing to be over-thrown; I mark her leaders bending their knees in solemn prayer, and crying, "Lord, save thy people, and bless thy heritage." But mine eye looks through the future with telescopic glance, and I see the happy period of the latter days, when Christ shall reign triumphant. I shall ask

them where is Babel? where is Rome? where is Mahomet? and the answer shall come—where? Why they have sunk into the depths; they have sunk to the bottom as a stone. Down there the horrid fire devours them, for the sea of glass is mingled with the fire of judgment. To-day I see a battle-field: the whole earth is torn by the hoofs of horses; there is the rumble of cannon and the roll of drum. "To arms! to arms!" both hosts are shouting. But you wait awhile, and you shall walk across this plain of battle, and say, "Seest thou that colossal system of error dead? There lies another, all frozen, in ghastly death, in motionless stupor. There lieth infidelity; there sleepeth secularism and the secularist; there lie those who defied God. I see all this vast host of rebels lying scattered upon the earth. "Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; Jehovah has gotten unto himself the victory, and the last of his enemies are destroyed." Then shall be the time when shall be sung "the song of Moses and of the Lamb."

III. Now, turning to the song of Moses, I shall conclude my address to you by noticing some interesting particulars in the song which will doubtless have a place in the everlasting orchestra of the redeemed, when they shall praise the Most High. Oh! my brethren, I could but wish that I had stood by the Red Sea, to have heard that mighty shout, and that tremendous roar of acclamation! Methinks one might well have borne a servitude in Egypt, to have stood in that mighty host who sung such mighty praise. Music hath charms; but never had it such charms as it had that day when fair Miriam led the women, and Moses led the men, like some mighty leader, beating time with his hand. "Sing unto the Lord, for he hath done gloriously." Methinks I see the scene; and I anticipate the greater day, when the song shall be sung again, "as the song of Moses and of the Lamb."

Now, just notice this song. In the 15th chapter of Exodus

you find it, and in divers of the Psalms you will see it amplified. The first thing I would have you notice in it is, that from beginning to end it is a praise of God, and of nobody else but God. Moses, thou hast said nothing of thyself. O great lawgiver, mightiest of men, did not thine hand grasp the mighty rod that split the sea—that burned its fair breast, and left a sear for a while upon its bosom? Didst not thou lead the hosts of Israel? Didst not thou marshal their thousands for battle, and like a mighty commander led them through the depths? Is there not a word for thee? Not one. The whole strain of the song is, "I will sing unto the Lord," from beginning to end. It is all praise of Jehovah; there is not one word about Moses, nor a single word in praise of the children of Israel. Dear friends, the last song in this world, the song of triumph, shall be full of God, and of no one else. Here you praise the instrument; to-day you look on this man and on that, and you say, "Thank God for this minister, and for this man?" To-day you say, "Blessed be God for Luther, who shook the Vatican, and thank God for Whitefield, who stirred up a slumbering church;" but in that day you shall not sing of Luther, nor of Whitefield, nor of any of the mighty ones of God's hosts; forgotten shall their names be for a season, even as the stars refuse to shine when the sun himself appeareth. The song shall be unto Jehovah, and Jehovah only; we shall not have a word to say for preachers nor bishops, not a syllable to say for good men and true; but the whole song from first to last shall be, "unto him that loved us and hath washed us from our sins in his own blood, unto him be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

And next will you please to note, that this song celebrated something of the fierceness of the enemy! Do you observe how, when the songster describes the attack of Pharaoh, he says, "The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my

sword, my hand shall destroy them." A song is made out of the wrath of Pharaoh. And it shall be so at the last. "The wrath of man shall praise God. I believe the last song of the redeemed, when they shall ultimately triumph, will celebrate in heavenly stanzas the wrath of man overcome by God. Sometimes after great battles, monuments are raised to the memory of the fight; and of what are they composed? They are composed of weapons of death and of instruments of war which have been taken from the enemy. Now, to use that illustration as I think it may be properly used, the day is coming when fury, and wrath, and hatred, and strife, shall all be woven into a song; and the weapons of our enemies, when taken from them, shall serve to make monuments to the praise of God. Rail on, rail on, blasphemer! Smite on, smite on, tyrant! Lift thy heavy hand, O despot; crush the truth, which yet thou canst not crush; knock from his head the crown—the crown that is far above thy reach—poor puny impotent mortal as thou art! Go on, go on! But all thou doest shall but increase his glories. For aught we care, we bid you still proceed with all your wrath and malice. Though it shall be worse for you, it shall be more glorious for our Master; the greater your preparations for war, the more splendid shall be his triumphal chariot, when he shall ride through the streets of heaven in pompous array. The more mighty your preparations for battle, the more rich the spoil which he shall divide with the strong. O! Christian, fear not the foe! Remember the harder his blows, the sweeter thy song; the greater his wrath, the more splendid thy triumph; the more he rages, the more shall Christ be honored in the day of his appearing. They sung the song of 'Moses and the Lamb.

And then will ye note, in the next place, how they sang the total overthrow of the enemy. There is one expression in this song, which ought to be and I believe is, when set to music, very frequently repeated. It is that part of the song, as recorded in

the Psalms, where it is declared that the whole host of Pharaoh were utterly destroyed, and there was not one of them left. When that great song was sung by the side of the Red Sea, there was, no doubt, a special emphasis laid upon that expression, "not one." I think I hear the hosts of Israel. When the words were known by them, they began and they proceeded thus—"There is not one of them left;" and then in various parts the words were repeated, "Not one, not one." And then the women with their sweet voices sang, "Not one, not one." I believe that at the last, a part of our triumph will be the fact, that there is not one left. We shall look abroad throughout the earth, and see it all a level sea; and not one foeman pursuing us—"not one, not one!" Raise thyself never so high, O thou deceiver, thou canst not live; for not one shall escape. Lift thy head never so proudly, O despot, thou canst not live; for not one shall escape. O heir of heaven, not one sin shall cross the Jordan after thee; not one shall pass the Red Sea to overtake thee; but this shall be the summit of thy triumph—"Not one, not one! not one of them is left."

Just let us note again, and I will not detain you too long, lest I weary you. One part of the song of Moses consisted in praising the ease with which God destroyed his enemies. "Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them; they sank as lead in the mighty waters." If we had gone to work to destroy the hosts of Pharaoh, what a multitude of engines of death should we have required. If the work had been committed to us, to cut off the hosts, what marvelous preparations, what thunder, what noise, what great activity there would have been. But mark the grandeur of the expression. God did not even lift himself from his throne to do it: he saw Pharaoh coming; he seemed to look upon him with a placid smile; he did just blow with his lips, and the sea covered them. You and I will marvel at the last how easy it has been to over-throw the enemies of the

Lord. We have been tugging and toiling all our life-time to be the means of overthrowing systems of error; it will astonish the church, when her Master shall come, to see how, as the ice dissolveth before the fire, all error and sin shall be utterly destroyed in the coming of the Most High. We must have our societies and our machinery, our preachers and our gatherings, and rightly too; but God will not require them at the last. The destruction of his enemies shall be as easy to him as the making of a world. In passive silence unmoved he sat; and he did but break the silence with "Let there be light; and light was." So shall he at the last, when his enemies are raging furiously, blow with his winds, and they shall be scattered; they shall melt even as wax, and shall be burned like tow; they shall be as the fat of rams; into smoke shall they consume, yea, into smoke shall they consume away.

Furthermore, in this song of Moses, you will notice there is one peculiar beauty. Moses not only rejoiced for what had been done, but for the future consequences of it. He says—"The people of Canaan, whom we are about to attack, will now be seized with sudden fear; by the greatness of thy arm they shall be as still as a stone." O! I think I hear them singing that too, sweetly and softly—"as still as a stone." How would the words come full, like gentle thunder heard in the distance—"as still as a stone!" And when we shall get on the other side the flood, see the triumph over our enemies, and behold our Master reigning, this will form a part of our song, that they must henceforth be "as still as a stone." There will be a hell, but it will not be a hell of roaring devils, as it now is. They shall be "as still as a stone." There will be legions of fallen angels, but they shall no longer have courage to attack us or defy God: they shall be "as still as a stone." O how grand will that sound, when the hosts of God's redeemed, looking down on the demons chained, bound, silenced, struck dumb with terror, shall sing exultingly over

them! They must be "as still as a stone;" and there they must lie, and bite their iron bands. The fierce despiser of Christ can no more spit in his face; the proud tyrant can no more lift his hands to oppress the saints; even Satan can no more attempt to destroy. They shall be "as still as a stone."

And last of all, the song concludes by noticing the eternity of God's reign; and this will always make a part of the triumphant song. They sang, "The Lord shall reign for ever and ever." Then I can suppose the whole band broke out into their loudest strain of music. "The Lord shall reign for ever and ever." Part of the melody of heaven will be—"The Lord shall reign for ever and ever." That song has cheered us here—"The Lord reigneth; blessed be my Rock!" And that song shall be our exultation there. "The Lord reigneth for ever and ever." When we shall see the placid sea of providence, when we shall behold the world all fair and lovely, when we shall mark our enemies destroyed, and God Almighty triumphant, then we shall shout the song—

*"Hallelujah! for the Lord
God Omnipotent shall reign;
Hallelujah! let the word
Echo round the earth and main."*

Oh! may we be there to sing it!

I have one remark to make, and I have done. You know, my friends, that as there is something in the song of Moses which is typical of the song of the Lamb, there was another song sung by the waters of the Red Sea which is typical of the song of hell. "What mean you, sir, by that dread thought?" Oh! shall I use the word music? Shall I profane the heavenly word so much as to say, 'twas doleful music which came from the lips of Pharaoh and his host? Boldly and pompously, with roll of drum and

blast of trumpet they had entered into the sea. On a sudden their martial music ceased; and ah! ye heavens and ye floods what was it? The sea was coming down upon them, utterly to devour them. Oh! may we never hear that shriek, that awful yell of hideous agony, that seemed to rend the sky, and then was hushed again, when Pharaoh and his mighty men were swallowed up, and went down quick into hell! Ah! stars, if ye had heard it, if the black pall of waters had not shut out the sound from you, ye might have continued trembling unto this hour, and mayhap ye are trembling now; mayhap your twinklings by night are on account of that terrible shriek ye heard; for sure it were enough to make you tremble on for ever. That dreadful shriek, that hideous moan, that horrible howl, when a whole army sank into hell at once when the waters swallowed them up!

Take heed, my friends, take heed, lest you should have to join in that terrible miserere; take heed, lest that horrible howl should be yours, instead of the song of the redeemed. And remember, so must it be, unless ye be born again, unless ye believe in Christ, unless ye repent of sin and renounce it wholly, and with trembling hearts put your confidence in the man of sorrows, who is soon to be crowned the King of kings and Lord of lords.

May God bless you, and give you all to taste of his salvation, that you may stand upon the sea of glass, and not have to feel the terrors of the mingled fire in the lower depths thereof! God Almighty bless this vast assembly, for Jesus' sake.

REVELATION 16

FIFTY-ONE
JUDGMENTS AND NO REPENTANCE:
REPENTANCE AND NO SALVATION

SERMON GIVEN ON AUGUST 25, 1887

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 16:9

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 34

“They repented not to give him glory.”

REVELATION 16:9.

IN reading this chapter, dear friends— this very terrible chapter— you must have been struck, I think, with the forces of God. Row great are the armies of the Lord of hosts! As the mighty Jehovah smote Pharaoh with overwhelming plagues, so doth the Lord in this awful portion of the Apocalypse deal with the ungodly. Seven angels stood forth, each one with his vial full of the wrath of God, to be poured out upon the earth. Seven executioners were needed, and seven were present: a perfect number for the accomplishment of the divine purpose. Behold, the angels of God are innumerable! “The chariots of

God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place." Our Lord Jesus Christ, even in his humiliation, said, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" The shining ones march in great armies, and God accomplishes many of his purposes by them, without our observing it. Are not their great doings all written in the book of the wars of the Lord, which as yet no man hath read? If there were no other powers at his disposal, Jehovah, as the Lord of all angels, would still be fitly called the Lord of hosts.

What power resides in these mysterious beings! With what energy does the Lord clothe them! They are made to fly swiftly on the errands of his wisdom. "He maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire." Here we find one of these angels pouring his bowl upon the earth, and causing a noisome and grievous sore upon men. Another empties his vial on the sea, and it becomes as the blood of a dead man. A third angel pours out his bowl upon the rivers, and the fountains of waters are ensanguined. Here one ventures to pour his bowl upon the golden sun, that orb which is of this great world both eye and soul, and the sun, as though its flame were re-fed with the most brilliant oil, burns with greater fury than ever; and we read, "Men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues." What power, then, hath God to accomplish his purposes, when a single angel can do as much as this; and the Lord hath myriads of them, waiting to do his bidding.

Note yet again, how all men are within the reach of the divine judgments. They proudly fancy that they can escape from God. Many a little Pharaoh says, in the hardness of his heart, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" Boastful worldlings dream that they, at any rate, are beyond punish-

ment; for their careful forethought will secure them against the calamities which others bring upon themselves. They are ungodly, but still they take good care of themselves, and keep clear of vice and prodigality. They are far too prudent to involve themselves in the perils of the gamester or the profligate. They prefer safer sins, and so they fancy that they are out of harm's reach, though they do not acknowledge God. Poverty cannot reach them, for they have filled their houses with hid treasure; sickness cannot hurt them, for they have a vigorous constitution. They defy dangers which have thrown down others. They boast themselves in the glory of their strength, and in the hardness of their hearts. These are the men who sit aloft, beyond the reach of the arrows of Jehovah. What folly! No man is at any moment beyond the reach of vengeance. The Lord has but to remember the callous and secure, and straightway the joints of their loins shall be loosed, and fearfulness shall take hold upon them: their proud hearts can fail them in a moment, even though no outward sorrow afflict them. In providence the detectives of God never fail to find out the guilty. This angel, you perceive, poured his vial on the sun, and by way of the sun, with his scorching heat, the proudest sons of men were visited. The noble and the great, the rich and the healthy, could not bear the increased solar heat, for the day burned as an oven. We know not by how many doors God can come at the guilty, but come at them he will when once his arm is bared for war. When he saith, "Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries," who shall withstand him? This land is exceedingly haughty, and some of its inhabitants talk as if they were demigods. Our insular pride makes us fancy that we shall prosper, come what may; but it is not so: we are great debtors to divine favour, and if we cease to acknowledge the Lord's hand in our prosperity he may teach us humility by sharp methods. God's right hand can find out his adversaries; and he will punish sin in Britain as

surely as he punished sin in Pome, or in Nineveh. If Jerusalem did not escape, shall London last for ever? No country, no city, and no man, however rich, or strong, or great, can climb beyond the reach of the divine hand. In the height or in the depth God is equally present in power: in this state or in the next he is equally able to dispense justice. No ivory throne can lift a monarch above Jehovah's rod; no pillar of fame can place a mortal beyond his sword. Oh that all of you would have the sense to see this! and as you cannot fly from God, fly to him. As you cannot resist the power of his justice, flee to the power of his mercy. When he stretches out his arms and invites you to come, turn not your backs. Come, like the prodigal, saying, "Father, I have sinned"; and he will graciously receive you. This terrible chapter takes away all hope from men as to their escaping from God when once he girds himself with vengeance, and sits down upon his throne of justice, to execute punishment. Then shall his right hand find out his enemies, and overturn them with swift destruction.

One truth, however, comes out of this passage more plainly than any other, to my mind; and that is, that judgments, even the most terrible of them, do not in themselves produce a satisfactory repentance in the minds of men. Let me read you two or three verses, and you will see how clearly this is the case. The punishment drove men into still more furious rebellion; in none did it subdue and sanctify them. "And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory. And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds." The twenty-first verse is to the same effect:—"And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone

about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail." The terrors of the Lord produced blasphemy, but they did not produce repentance.

I. In considering this subject, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, I would begin by saying that JUDGMENTS, APART FROM DIVINE GRACE, MAY PRODUCE A KIND OF REPENTANCE. It is repentance after a fashion, but it is not of that holy, healthy, heavenly sort which is wrought in the renewed heart by the Holy Ghost.

Judgment may produce a carnal repentance— a repentance that is of the flesh, and after the manner of the sinful nature of men. In this repentance the depravity of the heart remains the same in essence, though it takes another form of showing itself. Though the man changes, he is not savingly changed: he becomes another man, but not a new man. The same sin rules in him, but it is called by another name, and wears another dress. The stone is carved into a more sightly shape, but it is not turned into flesh. The iron is cast into another image, but it is not transformed into gold. This carnal repentance is caused by fear. Does not every thief repent of robbery when he is convicted and sent to jail? Does not every murderer repent of his crime when he stands under the fatal tree? This is the kind of repentance which the terrors of the Lord will work in men's minds unless they are altogether hardened and under the special dominion of the devil. Travellers in great storms will tremble, and, trembling, will confess their guilt, and begin to pray; but when the tempest is over, their trembling, their confession, and their praying are all over. They shake because of their sins, but they are not shaken out of their sins. Mariners far out at sea, when the labouring barque threatens to go down to the bottom, will repent; but such repentance is only a few qualms of conscience, because they are in dread of death, and judgment, and hell. So men that lie upon a bed of sickness,

when their bones ache, and their hearts melt, and the grave yawns beneath their couch, will often repent; and yet, if they could be raised up, they would return to their sins as the dog returns to his vomit. This is wretched work. This repentance gives no glory to God, and leads to no saving and lasting deliverance from sin. It is fallen nature washed, and brushed, and rouged; but allowed to remain fallen nature still. The heart is not renewed, the life is not regenerated, the mind is not changed; and, therefore, little is done that is worth the doing. The leopard is caged, but there are the spots; the Ethiopian is scrubbed, but his skin is as black as ever. This repentance is the outcome of nature under terror, and not the fruit of divine grace. The thunders, and the storms, and the hail, and the noisome sores can produce in men nothing more than a fleshly repentance; and flesh repenting is still flesh, and tends to corruption.

And hence, again, it is but a transient repentance. They repent but for a season. While they see the immediate evil of their sin in its results, they cry out as if they really hated sin; but their hatred is only a little tiff, which lasts for a while, and then they make friends with their sins, as Pilate made friends with Herod. Their goodness is as the morning cloud; and as the early dew it passes away. Even Ahab once repented; but, oh, what a poor and short-lived repentance it was! We find men turning away from their sin for a time, but then going back to it with a greater gusto, as men may abstain from food for some hours, in order to increase their appetite for the banquet which is preparing. Beware of that repentance which is nothing better than the vomit of a dog: how can it be acceptable with God? Beware of that repentance which comes of yourself, for it comes of the flesh; and that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and nothing better. That which is of the flesh is a mere flash; no sooner has it come than it is gone. "All flesh is grass," and the

flower of it soon withers away. When the Spirit of the Lord blows upon the fairest flower of our poor nature it straightway withers up; how could it be otherwise with grass? It is well that it should be withered up by the Spirit of God; for, left to itself, it will wither in a worse style, and our destruction will be sure. "The word of the Lord abideth for ever," but all the comeliness of man passes away. Beware, then, of a repentance which springs alone from terror— comes up in a night and withers in a night— appears and promises, but promises only to delude.

Such a repentance is superficial. It only affects the surface of the man. It does not go to the heart, it is hardly more than skin deep. How often have we been greatly grieved when we have seen persons in poverty, or in sickness, or in some great fright, or under some other form of excitement, who have professed repentance, and avowed it very loudly too; but yet you could see that the repentance did not go deep enough to make them give up their sin! Herod was exceedingly sorry that he had made an oath which bound him to give John's head in a charger to the daughter of Herodias; but he was not so sorry as to break loose from his wicked pledge. No. He committed the murder, though he said he was exceedingly sorry for it. How many there are that are hand and glove with the devil, and yet speak against him, so as to keep up a fair show before others! They take the sweetness and the profit of an evil trade, and yet condemn the trade itself. They derive rent from an ill house, but, of course, they are grieved that people should use their property for such a purpose! Such repentance as that is, to a large extent, sheer hypocrisy. It gives to men a kind of rest of conscience, which rest of conscience is injurious to them, since it lulls them to sleep, and enables them to wake and return to their sin as if nothing had happened. That repentance which is worth having turns a man inside out, and purges the innermost part of the soul, killing the love of sin, so that even if sin could

be made profitable and sweet to the man he could not abide it. If sin were buttered and sugared on both sides, the true penitent would not have it; for he has found that there is a deadly poison in its sweetness, and therefore he loathes it, and leaves it. The really repentant one hates sin as sin, and turns from it with purpose of heart. Beware of a superficial repentance, for the Lord abhors it. God is not mocked; he sees the loathsomeness of the ulcer through the film which seeks to hide it.

Once again, the awful terrors of God may produce a despairing repentance. This is deep enough, but then it lacks the element of bringing glory to God. It has in it no trace of submission, no touch of faith, no breath of love. There is nothing evangelical about it: it is legal all through, and therefore worthless for salvation. It is a kind of anticipation of the endless judgment and the wrath to come; but it is not a deliverance therefrom. Take Judas as a specimen. "I have sinned," says he. He flings down the accursed gold for which he had sold his Master and his own soul, but he goes out to hang himself. What an awful thing it is when the law of God and the terrors of God work upon the conscience, and arouse all a man's fears, and yet he will not fly to Christ! The man is so overcome with horror at the prospect of the world to come that, like a fool, he rushes upon his fate, even as the moth dashes into the flame of the candle. To escape from death he flies to death. To escape from the wrath of God he puts an end to his last hope of mercy, and rushes into the presence of an angry God uncalled. This is a dreadful repentance, from which I pray God to save you. It works death even in this life, and it works the second death in the world to come. If any of you are under the power of despair at this moment, I pray you, do not rest in it; for it is no more a place to rest in than hell itself. The satisfaction of despair, grim and dreadful thing as it is, has a sort of fascination for some minds, and they begin to be at peace in the midnight of hope-

lessness. They say there is no hope, and therefore they may as well sin up to the full, and get some sort of enjoyment out of their rebellion. Under this mad impulse they go from bad to worse, and sin more than ever. O my hearer, may God save thee from this, and bring thee to be touched with a sense of the love and of the grace of God, wherein there is hope, lest thou repent hopelessly and unbelievingly, and perish in thy repentance!

II. So you see, my brethren, judgments may produce a certain likeness of repentance: but then, secondly, **THEY DO NOT AND THEY CANNOT OF THEMSELVES PRODUCE A REPENTANCE SUCH AS GIVES GOD GLORY.** "They repented not to give him glory."

Now, this not giving God glory is a very important omission, and one which vitiates the whole matter. I would dwell upon it for a minute or two, that you may see how great is the failure. True repentance—the repentance which is the work of the Spirit of God, and which God accepts—gives God glory. Here are scales and balances for you, wherewith you may weigh your repentance before God. Do so with great care and jealousy. True repentance gives God glory; and it glorifies God in many ways, of which I have not time to tell you in full; but I can tell you enough to help you in self-examination. Is yours true repentance or not? That is the question. I believe that true repentance has as pure and sincere a worship in it as the anthems of the glorified above. It is a form of adoration as suitable to sinners as the eternal hallelujahs are suitable for perfect beings.

First, it reverences and adores God's omniscience. It is a confession of the fact of God's knowledge, and the truthfulness of his statements, for the man says, "O Lord, I am what thy Word says I am. I am a sinner through and through; and I know while I confess my sin that thou knowest more about my sin than I do. I lay bare my soul, but it never was possible for me to

hide it from thy inspection. Thou hast seen my thoughts, and the secret intents of my heart. Before thee have I sinned. In thy sight have I done evil. Thou knowest me altogether, and I adore thine omniscience." Every true penitent is conscious of the divine eye resting upon him; and he in lowliest manner acknowledges the piercing and discerning power of that eye. The real penitent asks that the Lord would reveal to him more and more of his true condition, that he may not cloak his sin, nor deceive himself in any way, but may be honest and upright before God. Such repentance gives glory to the omniscience of God.

Next, the truly penitent gives glory to the righteousness of God in his law. The man that really hates sin says, "Lord, I do not quarrel with thy law. Thy law is holy, and just, and good: the fault is with me, for I am carnal, sold under sin. No law could be more exactly right and just than thy law is, and in having transgressed against it I am deeply guilty, and I own my folly and crime. Whatever becomes of me, I dare not impugn the law which condemns me. I adore its infinite majesty and purity." Impenitence rails at the law as too severe, speaks of transgression as a trifle, and of future punishment as cruelty; but the truly repentant soul admires the law, and champions it even against its own self. Do you know all this in your own heart?

Next, the sincerely penitent also adores and glorifies the justice of God in his punishment of transgression. I know that when I was under a sense of sin I felt that if God did not punish me he ought to do so. I could not see how God could be the Judge of all the earth if he did not visit my transgressions with infinite wrath. I had no quarrel with the sternest word either of the Old or of the New Testament. I was bound under my sense of guilt to bare my back to its scourges, and to lay my neck upon its block. I said in so many words—

*"And if my soul were sent to hell,
Thy righteous law approves it well."*

This is real penitence, when the man gives glory to the justice of God, even though it condemns him. O my hearer, do you thus repent? Is sin really sinful to you? Do you see its desert of hell? If not, your repentance needs to be repented of.

And, next, true repentance glorifies the sovereignty of God in his mercy. The man who is deeply conscious of his guilt, says, "Lord, I have no claim on thee. I have no rights, but the right to be punished. I have forfeited all claim to favour and reward. If thou wilt freely forgive me, if thou canst justly do so, I will for ever adore thee for so doing; but I cannot say that I have any right thereto. If thou wilt pardon me, it must be thine own act and deed, performed on grounds within thyself. I know that thou hast a sovereign right, as King of kings, to execute the sentence of the law, or to condone my offence, if thou canst do it in consistency with justice. I must leave myself absolutely in thy hands." That man truly, deeply, sincerely repents who perceives that there is justice in the declaration of God, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." How some people bite their lips when they hear these sentences! and yet they are the very voice of Jehovah, the God whom I adore. He claims to be absolute in the realm of grace, doing as he pleases with his own. Let him do as he wills, for his will is holy love. We can trust absolute authority with him who is the infinitely good and just. In the absolute sovereignty of God there is hope for the most guilty of men. We do not fully repent of sin until we feel that it is so, and confess that the Lord has a right to do as he pleases in this matter, whether he justly destroys us or graciously saves us.

Further, I believe that the man has repented to the glory of

God when he spies out that there is a way by which God can be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly— when he sees the Lord Jesus Christ, the adorable Son of God, coming in our human nature and becoming the substitute for sinners, and the sacrifice for sin. That is true repentance which washes the Redeemer's feet with her tears, and wipes them with the hairs of her head. Those dear feet had not been pierced when the woman thus washed them; but they have been pierced now. Let us wash the nail-prints with the tears of our repentance at this hour! Dost thou rejoice in Jesus crucified? Dost thou love Christ? Dost thou trust him? Dost thou leap for joy at the very thought that God hath set him forth to be a propitiation for sin? This is repentance after a godly sort. This is repentance that needeth not to be repented of. Repentance makes a rainbow with her tears of grief for sin, and her glances of hope at the love of Christ and his great finished work. Repentance stands at the cross, and sees sin forgiven, and then repents more than she ever did when she could not spy out forgiveness. She says of her sins,

*"I know they are forgiven,
But now their pain to me
Is all the grief and anguish
They laid, my Lord, on thee."*

Sin in the anguish of conviction does not so effectually break a heart as sin forgiven. A sense of blood-bought pardon soon dissolves a heart of stone. Hannibal, it is said, dissolved the rocks of the Alps with vinegar; but Christ dissolves our hearts with love. He tells us, "I have blotted out thy sins. I bore on the tree the ransom for thee. I have poured out my heart's blood that thou mightest live." And then it is that we hate sin with a perfect hatred, and are full of mourning because we pierced the

Lord. Because evil is so hateful to the heart of Jesus we loathe it intensely. This is the repentance which glorifies God. The Lord grant such repentance to every one of us!

For, mark you, it glorifies God in one other way— by setting the sinner ever afterwards craving after holiness. “The burnt child dreads the fire”; and the sinner dreads sin when he has been delivered from the flame of it by the Lord Jesus. Because Jesus suffered so bitterly, he feels that he himself suffered, and so feels as much dread of sin as if he had himself been made to die through it. The man who knows that his sins have been forgiven, will never be satisfied with any degree of sanctification short of being made like unto him who took his sin away. “He was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him,” and to this result we press forward. While that passage relates mainly to our justification, yet the Lord Jesus Christ has also an eye to our sanctification. He hath redeemed us that we may be a people zealous for good works, and may in all things serve him who hath redeemed us, not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with his own precious blood. Perfect holiness is our aspiration. Oh that it were our attainment! But the very aspiration gives glory to the thrice holy God, whom we desire to imitate.

Now, beloved friends, the judgments of God in and of themselves can never work evangelical repentance in a single human heart.

*“Law and terrors do but harden,
All the while they work alone;
’Tis a sense of blood-bought pardon
That dissolves the heart of stone.”*

You see, then, how a gracious repentance glorifies God: do

you know anything of such a repentance? Answer, I pray you, as before the Lord, whom no man can deceive.

III. But now, thirdly, I go a step further—THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD, APART FROM DIVINE GRACE, MAY, THROUGH OUR HARDNESS OF HEART, INVOLVE US IN GREATER SIN.

Listen to me, any of you that have been much tried and afflicted, and yet have never come to Jesus. I tell you, if God has chastened you very much, until he is saying to-night, “O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee?” then all this chastening which you have despised involves you in deeper sin, because you now sin with a clearer knowledge of what sin really is. A young man came to London, and he fell into vice. He has had to suffer very grievously for it, and if he has not heartily repented— if he goes back again to his folly— there will be sevenfold damnation about his evil way in future. Let him remember this. He cannot sin cheaply now. He knows what he is at, and his offence will be distinctly wilful, and therefore rankly offensive. You scarcely knew that it was fire at first, but you know now: if you go and put your finger into the fire again you deserve to be burned.

A man that has suffered divine judgment, and yet goes back to sin, increases his guilt, because there is the element of defiance in his obstinacy. He has come to be like Pharaoh, who stoutly resisted Jehovah and his commands. Let the Lord send his plagues: Pharaoh will brazen it out with him. O dear friend, I hope that you have not yet reached such a fearful state of mind. I hope you are not bent on war with the Almighty! I trust you will not dash upon the bosses of his buckler. Do not say, “Sickness may follow sickness, but I shall not yield. Loss may follow loss, but I will not turn from my ways. I am of too tough metal to care for such things.” If so, you have deliberately thrown down the gage of battle to the Lord of all the earth.

Think of the conflict: do no more. Shall the tow contend with the fire? Yet such is thine ignorant pride in thus defying God. This must be the case when judgments do not bring repentance, for they introduce the element of defiance into the man's impenitent perseverance in evil, and so make him doubly guilty.

Moreover, to many lives judgments also introduce the element of falsehood. The man vowed that if he recovered from sickness he would fear God. He was sick, and a saint he would be. But when he got well, ah! how much of a saint was he? You know the old proverb. I need not quote it further. Yes, many have lied unto God. Hear it. They have not lied unto men, but lied unto God in this matter, till now their life is a continued provoking of God by broken promises and disregarded covenants. Ah me! This blackens a life. What! Has your whole life become an elaborate lie? Are you every moment acting falsely? Are you every hour violating vows and promises made to your God? O man, what will become of you when the God of Ananias and Sapphira comes to deal with you?

I do fear that there are some whose conduct has in it the element of deliberate hatred of God; for these have had time now to see which way evil goes, and yet they follow it. They love sin as sin. They have been losers by their misconduct, and yet they pursue it. We have often seen persons reduced to rags and beggary by their folly and vice, and we have helped them to begin life again; but in a few days they have been in the same destitution through the same drunkenness, or vice, or idleness which brought them to the dogs before. They seem incorrigible, obstinately set on their iniquities; and all that can be done for them by the scourges of God's hand does not affect them in the least for the better. In this there is an aversion to goodness, a love of evil, and so far a hatred of God. "They say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways."

This introduces the element of presumption, of deliberation, of resolve; and when men sin so, there is a talent of lead in the measure of their iniquity, and it weighs exceeding heavily. Sins of impetuous passion, and of wild juvenile haste, are bad enough; but there is not in them the element of intense wickedness which is evidently present in the deliberate pursuit of sin in the teeth of suffering, or in the continuance in evil when its results are daily felt. On such evenings as these it is strange what sorts of people make up the congregation at the Tabernacle. I may be speaking to-night— I do not doubt I am— to some that, year after year, against a mother's tears, and the importunities of friends, and the advice of those who have wished them well, have still kept on and on in a sinful course which they themselves condemn. Knowing better, they persist in wrong. Knowing what the end will be, they are madly set upon their own ruin. O sirs, if you choose your own delusions, if you will ride steeplechase to hell over hedge and ditch, if you will be damned, who is to stand in your way, and what shall be said by way of pity for you? O God, have mercy upon such! Many in this city are breaking a father's heart, and bringing a mother's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. After all they have endured, they still cling to their filthy idols, and go after their impure lusts; and they will do so until God shall end their days in his wrath, and summon them to his bar. My heart breaks at the thought of some of you! Will you never repent, and give God glory? Will you pursue your follies even into the unquenchable fires?

Now, this is a dreadful thing— that the judgments of God should, through the wickedness of men, even lead them to still greater sin.

IV. Therefore, in the last place— and with this I finish—
THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD ARE TO BE VIEWED

WITH GREAT DISCRETION. He who studies them must do it with solemn care.

Judgments tend to good. Do not forget that. They ought to tend to good to you who are exercised by them. How many are aroused to think of better things by sickness in their own persons, or sudden death in others! National judgments are frequently a ministry of grace. The first year in which I came to London, I was greatly struck with the access that one had at all hours of day and night to people's houses, into which no ministers of Christ had ever been welcomed before. I remember, at two o'clock one Monday morning, I was in a house, now pulled down, close to London Bridge, to see a man who had spent the Sunday at Brighton, and had come home to die with the cholera. Yes, they sent for me at dead of night often and often then; and rich and poor— it mattered not, if they found some one willing to come and visit them — were eager for you to read and pray with them; for death was all around us, making havoc in these streets. They are not so eager for a visit now. So far, cholera did arouse our neighbours, and they flocked to hear the Word out of very fear. So much of benefit there may be in the plagues which are shot from the quiver of providence.

And judgments do impress some men. Many will come to hear a sermon just after a dear baby has died, or a brother or father has been taken away. Death whips the careless into thought. Then there is an impression. So far so good, if God makes use of it by his Spirit. Judgments may be black horses upon which Christ rides triumphantly to the doors of men's minds.

Some, no doubt, are sweetly subdued by judgments, when these are qualified with grace. The grace of God working with their afflictions, they bow themselves beneath the chastening hand; and when they do this, it is good for them that they are afflicted. God has sent the black dog to fetch the wandering

sheep into the fold, and it runs to the shepherd through fear of the dog. So far judgments may do great good, by humbling, softening, and bringing down. O Lord, use them to this end among the afflicted ones around us!

But then, next, still let it be recollected that these things will not work good of themselves. I want you to remember this, because I have known people say, "Well, if I were afflicted I might be converted. If I lay sick I might be saved." Oh, do not think so. Sickness and sorrow of themselves are no helps to salvation. Pain and poverty are not evangelists; disease and despair are not apostles. Look at the lost in hell. Suffering has effected no good in them. He that was filthy here is filthy there. He that was unjust in this life is unjust in the life to come. There is nothing in pain and suffering that, by their own natural operation, will tend to purification. Place no hope in that direction. If there were a purgatory of years of pain, it would be only purgative in name, for suffering cannot cleanse from sin.

Think of the many who are every day suffering as the result of their sinful conduct; and yet the more they suffer the more they sin. We know many such. You need not take your walks far abroad before you will find men plunged in poverty, whose poverty is traceable distinctly to their own fault, and in that fault they still continue, and even grow worse and worse for all they suffer.

So it is with men that lie a-dying. You must not suppose that their pain is any help to them towards repentance. Poor souls their anguish drives good thoughts out of their minds. Death-bed repentances it were hard to estimate: we must leave them with God. But it is a sorrowful fact that those which seemed to be death-bed repentances have seldom turned out to be worth anything when the men have recovered. In fact, I do not remember a case in which the person who recovered has

been at all what he said he would be when he thought that he was on the borders of the grave. So you see, suffering is no help to repentance, and it may be a hindrance.

Now, what I have to say to you is this. Oh, that God would lead you to repent now, before any of his judgments fall upon you! Why should we not repent at once? Surely we ought to repent of doing wrong when we perceive that we are wronging so good a God. He has not cut you down; he has not taken away your wife: is this a reason for being hard-hearted? It ought to tell the other way. He has spared that fair-haired child to you; he has not allowed your business to be ruined by your neglect; he has helped you although you have been hurting yourself. Well, then, turn to him. Drawn by his love, turn to him. Say in your heart, "I cannot offend any more. I cannot sin against so good, so kind a God as this."

Permit me also to say to you how much nobler and sweeter a thing it is to be drawn than to be driven. How much better to come cheerfully and willingly, led by motives of love to God, than to be like the bullock that is forced to bear the yoke, or the "horse, or the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle." Must you be beaten to Christ? How much more honourable to turn to God in the cheerful, bright days that are now yours. Oh, that I could persuade you! If there is any right principle in you, you will yield, and glorify God by hearty repentance.

And then, again, recollect, you can repent now so much more clearly than in the hour of sickness. God helping you, this is a very good hour for repenting. I find that when I am in great pain, I cannot work out a case. I say to people, "Oh, don't come to me with your questions. There, go and do whatever you like. I shall be sure to say the wrong thing: my judgment is not clear, I am in too much pain." How will you acceptably repent when you can hardly keep from crying out with agony? How will you

rightly repent when the head is aching, when the heart is palpitating, when you are gasping for breath, when the death-sweat beads your brow? Oh, that you would think of these things now, while your intellect is clear and your body is not racked and tortured! God help you so to do!

And do you not see how much more likely it is to be genuine repentance, if it be rendered freely? You are not frightened now, and are more likely to be your honest self. You are not under terror now, and therefore you are not so likely to play the hypocrite. To-night you have come into this place in good health, happy and cheerful, and God has made everything bright about you; what can I better commend to you than immediately to seek the Lord? Does not wisdom herself speak, and cry aloud to you now? Forsake sin, and turn with purpose of heart to Jesus Christ the Saviour, whose Spirit is even now working with you while these words are being spoken. Yield to the sacred pressure of the Spirit of God. That which now inclines thee to relent is the good Spirit of love and mercy. Bow thyself before it, as the wheat ripened for the sickle bows before the wind. Give glory to God by yielding to the movements of his Spirit. Cry out, I pray you, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. I would quit my sin; help me to quit it now for Jesus' sake, and to give thee glory."

Amen.

REVELATION 19

FIFTY-TWO
THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB

SERMON GIVEN ON JULY 21, 1889

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 19:7-8

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 35

“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.”

REVELATION 19:7, 8.

LAST Lord's-day we saw clearly from God's Word that our Lord is worshipped in heaven under the character of a Lamb. Now, by a Lamb was meant sacrifice, sacrifice for the putting away of sin: according to the text, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” It is against the great

doctrine of atonement and substitutionary death that the attacks of the present unbelieving age are constantly being made; and therefore I set before you the truth that substitution and sacrifice were not a temporary expedient, but that they continue all through the whole history of salvation, and remain in the very highest place, even in heaven itself, and will continue evermore. Do not forget that, whenever we read of Christ as a Lamb, it is to remind us of his sufferings and death in our room, and place, and stead, for the putting away of our sin. Under that character we looked to him, some of us, years ago, and found peace at the first. We are still looking to him under that same character; and when we attain to heaven, we shall not have to change our thought of him, but we shall still see him as a Lamb that has been slain. In our lowest place, when we came out of the Egypt of our bondage, he was the Lamb of God's passover; and in our highest place, in the heavenly temple, we shall still regard him as "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

This morning my principal aim shall be to show you that the blessed and glorious union, which is to be celebrated between the church and her Lord, will be the marriage "of the Lamb." The ever blessed and eternal union of hearts with Christ will be in reference to his sacrifice, specially and emphatically. The perfected union of the entire church of God with her divine husband is here described by the beloved apostle, who laid his head upon his Master's bosom, and knew most about him, and who was under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost, in these words: "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready."

Whatever else we think of at this time, my discourse will aim at this as the white of the target— namely, that Jesus Christ as the Lamb, the sacrifice, is not only the beginning, but the end; not only the foundation, but the topstone of the whole

sacred edifice of the temple of grace. The consummation of the whole work of redemption is the marriage of the church to Christ; and, according to “the true sayings of God,” this is “the marriage of the Lamb.”

I will set forth this marriage as best I am able. It is divinely veiled as well as revealed in this Revelation. God forbid we should intrude where the Holy Spirit shuts us out; but still, what we do know of it, let us now think upon, and may the sacred Spirit make it profitable to us!

I. First, I invite your attention to THE ANTECEDENTS OF THIS MARRIAGE. What will happen before the public marriage is celebrated?

One great event will be the destruction of the harlot church. I have just read, in your hearing, the previous chapter, which declares the overwhelming destruction which will fall upon that evil system. Any church which puts in the place of justification by faith in Christ another method of salvation, is a harlot church. The doctrine of justification by faith in Christ is the article of a standing or a falling church. Where the blood is precious, there is life; where atonement by the sacrifice is preached and loved, there will the Spirit of God bear effectual testimony; but where human priests are put in the place of Jesus, where pardons can be purchased, where there is an unbloody sacrifice instead of the great propitiation, and sacraments are exalted as the means of regeneration; there the church is no longer a chaste virgin unto Christ, but she hath turned aside from her purity.

The Antichristian system is to be utterly extirpated and burnt with fire; for you will perceive, in the fourteenth verse of the seventeenth chapter, that those who were associated with this false church, “shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings”; and there has been no more wicked nor more deter-

mined war with the Lamb, than that which has been waged by superstition supported by unbelief. The harlot church and the beast of infidelity are in real league against the simple faith of Christ. If you point men, no matter where— if you point them away from Christ, you point them to Antichrist. If you teach them what you may, no matter how philosophical it may seem — if in any way it takes them off from building upon the one foundation of Christ's glorious and finished work, you have laid an Antichristian foundation, and all that is built thereon will be destroyed. Everything which sets up itself in opposition to the sacrifice of Christ, is to be hurled down, and made to sink like a millstone in the flood. I would God the hour were come! Oh, that the Lord's own right arm were bare, and that we heard the cry, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen." It is ours to expect the speedy coming of our Lord; yet, if he tarry, it may be many a day before "her plagues come in one day." But, wait as we may, so it shall be, the day must come when the true church shall be honoured, and the harlot church shall be abhorred. The Bride of Christ is a sort of Cinderella now, sitting among the ashes. She is like her Lord, "despised and rejected of men"; the watchmen smite her, and take away her veil from her; for they know her not, even as they knew not her Lord. But when he shall appear, then shall she appear also, and in his glorious manifestation she also shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of the Father.

Furthermore, in the immediate connection, we note that before the marriage of the Lamb, there was a peculiar voice. Head the fifth verse: "And a voice came." Where from? "A voice came out of the throne." Whose voice was that? It was not the voice of the Eternal God; for it said, "Praise our God, all ye his servants." Whose voice, then, could it be? No one but God could be upon the throne save the Lamb, who is God. Surely, it was he who said, "Praise our God." The Mediator, God-and-

man in one person, was on the throne as a Lamb, and he announced the day of his own marriage. Who should do it but he? "A voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great." He speaks the word which calls on all the servants of God to praise him, because his complete victory had come. Longing to see of the travail of his soul, earnest to gather in all his elect, he speaks; for the fulness of time has come, when his joy shall be full, and he shall rejoice over the whole company of his redeemed as for ever one with himself.

The voice from the throne is a very remarkable one; for it shows how near akin the exalted Christ is to his people. He saith to all the redeemed, "Praise our God, all ye his servants." It reminds me of his memorable words, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." He was not then ashamed to associate his people with him in the high possession of his Father and his God; and up there upon the throne, he saith, "Praise our God." I do not know how this language strikes you; but to me it forcibly sets forth his love, his condescension, his fraternization, his union with his people. Since I know not how to set it out to you, I must leave you to think over it. He who has gone triumphantly up to the throne, the Saviour whose conflicts are all over, who has gained the everlasting reward of sitting with the Father upon his throne, still joins with us in praise, and saith, "Praise our God, all ye his servants." He is not even ashamed to have fellowship with the least of his people; for he adds, "And ye that fear him, both small and great." Truly "the man is near of kin to us, he is our next kinsman."

*"In ties of blood, with sinners one,
Our Jesus hath to glory gone."*

In that glory he still owns his dear relationship, and in the midst of the church he singeth praise unto God. (Heb. ii. 11, 12.)

Next, notice the response to this voice; for this also precedes the marriage. No sooner did that one august voice summon them to praise, than immediately “I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude.” He heard the mingled sound as of an innumerable host all joining in the song; for the redeemed of the Lord are not a few. No man can count them. “Out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation,” they respond in that day to the voice of the Lamb, saying, “Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.” So loud was the sound of all those commingled voices, that it sounded like “many waters”; like cataracts in their roar, or like oceans in their fulness. It was as though all the billows of the Atlantic, and the Pacific, and the Northern, and Southern oceans lifted up their voices, and deep answered unto deep. Nor was the figure too strong; for John heaps upon it another comparison, and says, “As the voice of mighty thunderings.” We have lately heard the thunder above the deafening din of our streets, and we have trembled at the dread artillery of heaven. Such was the sound of the mingled voices of the redeemed when they all united to give honour to God, because the marriage of the Lamb had come. Who can imagine the acclamations of that glorious day? We now preach the gospel, as it were, in a corner, and few there are that will applaud the King of kings. Still, the Christ wendeth his way through the world as an unknown or forgotten man; and his church, following behind him, seemeth as a forlorn and forsaken woman— few there be that care for her. But in that day when her Lord is seen as the King of kings, and she is openly acknowledged as his spouse, what welcomes will be heard, what bursts of adoring praise unto the Lord God omnipotent!

Observe that this tremendous volume of sound will be full of rejoicing and of devout homage. "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him." Double joy will be there, and its expression will be homage to the Lord God. The joy of joys will be the delight of Christ in his perfectly gathered church. There is joy in heaven in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth; but when all these repenting sinners are gathered into one perfected body, and married to the Lamb, what will be the infinite gladness? Heaven is always heaven, and unspeakably full of blessedness; but even heaven has its holidays, even bliss has its overflowings; and on that day when the springtide of the infinite ocean of joy shall have come, what a measureless flood of delight shall overflow the souls of all glorified spirits as they perceive that the consummation of love's great design is come—"The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready"! We do not know yet, beloved, of what happiness we are capable. We have sometimes wished that we could

*"Sit and sing ourselves away
To everlasting bliss."*

But then we were only feeling the spray of the ocean of blessedness. What must it be to bathe in it? Here we drink from cups of consolation; but what draughts we shall have when we lie down at the well-head, and drink in our joy immediately from God! If you and I enter glory soon without our bodies, we shall not even then know to the utmost degree what will be the bliss of our perfected manhood, when the body shall be raised incorruptible from among the dead, and joined to the sinless soul. Nor would this give us more than a bare idea of the infinite blessedness of myriads of such perfected manhoods united in a perfected church; from which no one single member shall

be missing, nor one member maimed, or sick, or stained. Praise the Lord Jesus as you sing—

*“Thou the whole body shalt present
Before thy Father’s face;
Nor shall a wrinkle, or a spot,
The beauteous form deface.”*

Oh, what joy! I feel as if I could not preach to you: I want to get away to think it over, and chew the cud of meditation for myself. You must just sit where you are and muse. Here we have the essence of heavenly music in a few plain words. “The marriage of the Lamb is come.” Oh, may I be there! May I be a part of the perfected body of the church of God! Oh, that I might be but part of the soles of her feet, or the least hair of her head! If I may but see the King in his beauty, in the fulness of his joy, when he shall take by the right hand her for whom he shed his precious blood, and shall know the joy which was set before him, for which he endured the cross, despising the shame, I shall be blest indeed!

Thus, I have given you a hint of what will precede the marriage of the Lamb, in all of which you may observe that Jesus wears his character of the Lamb. The harlot church hath fought against the Lamb, and the Lamb hath overcome her forces. He it is that, on the throne, speaks to his people as his brethren; it is to him that the response is given; for the joy and the delight all spring from the fact that the marriage is that of the Lamb whom the Father glorifies, and who glorifies the Father. The voice said, “Let us rejoice, and give honour to him.” Was not that his prayer of old, “Father, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee”? To glorify the Father, Jesus died as a sacrifice; and to glorify Jesus, the Father gives him his church, which is redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

II. Now may I be helped by the Spirit of God, while I lead you on to THE MARRIAGE ITSELF. "The marriage of the Lamb is come." Often as you hear about this marriage of the Lamb, I greatly question whether any here have any precise idea what it means. Dean Alford says, "This figure of a marriage between the Lord and his people, is too frequent and familiar to need explanation." With all deference to the excellent divine, that was a very sufficient reason why he should have carefully explained it, since that which is often noted in Holy Scripture must be of first importance, and should be well understood. I do not wonder that many are shy of such a theme, for it is a difficult one. Alas, how little do I, personally, know of such a matter!

The marriage of the Lamb is the result of the eternal gift of the Father. Our Lord says, "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me." His prayer was, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." The Father made a choice, and the chosen he gave to his Son to be his portion. For them he entered into a covenant of redemption, whereby he was pledged in due time to take upon himself their nature, pay the penalty of their offences, and set them free to be his own. Beloved, that which was arranged in the councils of eternity and settled there between the high contracting parties, is brought to its ultimate end in that day when the Lamb takes unto himself in everlasting union the whole of those whom his Father gave him from of old.

Next: this is the completion of the betrothal, which took place with each of them in time. I shall not attempt elaborate distinctions; but as far as you and I were concerned, the Lord Jesus betrothed each one of us unto himself in righteousness, when first we believed on him. Then he took us to be his, and

gave himself to be ours, so that we could sing—“My beloved is mine, and I am his.” This was the essence of the marriage. Paul, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, represents our Lord as already married to the church. This may be illustrated by the Oriental custom, by which, when the bride is betrothed, all the sanctities of marriage are involved in those espousals; but yet there may be a considerable interval before the bride is taken to her husband’s house. She dwells with her former household, and has not yet forgotten her kindred and her father’s house, though still she is espoused in truth and righteousness. Afterwards, she is brought home on an appointed day, the day which we should call the actual marriage; but yet the betrothal is, to Orientals, of the very essence of the marriage. Well, then, you and I are betrothed to our Lord today, and he is joined to us by inseparable bonds. He does not wish to part with us, nor could we part from him. He is the delight of our souls, and he rejoices over us with singing. Rejoice that he has chosen you and called you, and through the betrothal look forward to the marriage. Feel even now, that though in the world, you are not of it: your destiny does not lie here among these frivolous sons of men. Our home is henceforth on high.

*“My heart is with him on his throne,
And ill can brook delay;
Each moment listening for the voice,
‘Rise up, and come away.’”*

The marriage day indicates the perfecting of the body of the church. I have already told you that the church will then be completed, and it is not so now. Adam lay asleep, and the Lord took out of his side a rib, and fashioned thereof a help-meet for him: Adam saw her not when she was in the forming, but he opened his eyes, and before him was the perfect form of his

help-meet. Beloved, the true church is now in the forming, and is therefore not visible. There are many churches; but as to the one church of Christ, we see it neither here nor there. We speak of the visible church; but the term is not correct. The thing which we see is a mixture of believers and mere pretenders to faith. The church which is affianced unto the heavenly Bridegroom is not visible as yet; for she is in the process of formation. The Lord will not allow such simpletons as we are to see his half-finished work. But the day will come when he shall have completed his new creation, and then will he bring her forth whom he has made for the second Adam, to be his delight to all eternity. The church is not perfected as yet. We read of that part of it which is in heaven, that "They without us should not be made perfect." Unless you and I get there, if we are true believers, there cannot be a perfect church in glory. The music of the heavenly harmonies as yet lacks certain voices. Some of its needful notes are too bass for those already, and others are too high for them, till the singers come who are ordained to give the choir its fullest range. At the Crystal Palace you have seen the singers come trooping in. The conductor is all anxiety if they seem to linger. Still, some are away. The time is nearly up, and you see seats up there on the right, and a vacant block down there on the left. Even so with the heavenly choir: they are streaming in: the orchestra is filling up, but yet there is room, and yet there is demand for other voices to complete the heavenly harmony. Beloved, in the day of the marriage of the Lamb, the chosen shall all be there— the great and the small— even all the believers who are wrestling hard this day with sins and doubts and fears. Every living member of the living church shall be there to be married to the Lamb.

By this marriage is meant more than I have told you. There is the home-bringing. You are not to live hero for ever in these

tents of Kedar, among a people of a strange tongue; but the blessed Bridegroom cometh to take you to the happy country, where you shall no longer say, "My soul is among lions." All the faithful shall soon be away to thy land, O Emmanuel! We shall dwell in the land that floweth with milk and honey, the land of the unclouded and unsetting sun, the home of the blessed of the Lord. Happy indeed will be the home-bringing of the perfect church!

The marriage is the coronal-avowal. The church is the bride of the great King, and he will set the crown upon her head, and make her to be known as his true spouse for ever. Oh, what a day that will be when every member of Christ shall be crowned in him, and with him, and every member of the mystical body shall be glorified in the glory of the Bridegroom! Oh, may I be there in that day! Brethren, we must be with our Lord in the fight if we would be with him in the victory. We must be with him in wearing the crown of thorns, if we are to be with him in wearing the crown of glory. We must be faithful by his grace, even unto death, if we are to share the glory of his endless life.

I cannot tell you all it means, but certainly this marriage signifies that all who have believed in him shall then enter into a bliss which shall never end; a bliss which no fear approacheth, or doubt becloudeth. They shall be for ever with the Lord, for ever glorified with him. Expect not lips of clay fitly to speak on such a theme. Tongues of fire are needed, and words that fall like fire-flakes on the soul.

A day will come, the day of days, time's crown and glory, when, all conflict, risk, and judgment ended for ever, the saints, arrayed in the righteousness of Christ, shall be eternally one with him in living, loving, lasting union, partaking together of the same glory, the glory of the Most High. What must it be to be there! My dear hearers, will you be there? Make your calling

and election sure. If you are not trusting in the Lamb on earth, you will not reign with the Lamb in his glory. He that doth not love the Lamb, as the atoning sacrifice, shall never be the bride of the Lamb. How can you hope to be glorified with him if you neglect him in the day of his scorning? O Lamb of God, my sacrifice, I must be one with thee, for this is my very life! I could not live apart from thee. If, my hearer, thou canst thus speak, there is good hope that thou shalt be a participator in the marriage of the Lamb.

III. But we pass on now to dwell emphatically upon the fact that **THE CHARACTER UNDER WHICH THE BRIDEGROOM APPEARS IS THAT OF THE LAMB.** "The marriage of the Lamb is come."

It must be so, because first of all our Saviour was the Lamb in the eternal covenant; when this whole matter was planned, arranged and settled by the foresight and decree of eternity. lie is "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," and the covenant was with him, as one who was to be the surety, the substitute, the sacrifice for guilty men. So, and not otherwise, was it of old.

It was next as the Lamb that he loved us and proved his love. Beloved, he did not give us words of love merely when he came from heaven to earth, and dwelt among us "a lowly man before his foes"; but he proceeded to deeds of truest affection. The supreme proof of his love was that he was led as a lamb to the slaughter. When he poured out his blood as a sacrifice, it might have been said, "Behold, how he loved them! If you would prove the love of Jesus, you would not mention the transfiguration, but the crucifixion. Gethsemane and Golgotha would rise to your lips. Here to demonstration, beyond all possibility of doubt by any true heart, the Well-beloved proved his love to us. See how it runs: "He loved me, and gave himself for me," as if that giving of himself for me was the clear proof

that he loved me. Read again: "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it." himself for it. The proof of his love to the church was the giving up of "Being found in fashion as a man he humbled himself, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross." "Herein is love, not that wo loved God, but that he loved us." So, you see, as a Lamb he proved his love, and as a Lamb he celebrated his marriage with us.

Go a step further. Love in marriage must be on both sides, and it is as the Lamb that we first came to love him. I had no love to Christ, how could I have, till I saw his wounds and blood? "We love him, because he first loved us." His perfect life was a condemnation to me, much as I was compelled to admire it; but the love that drew me to him was shown in his substitutionary character, when he bore my sins in his own body on the tree. Is it not so with you, beloved? I have heard a great deal about conversions through admiration of the character of Christ, but I have never met with one: all I have ever met with have been conversions through a sense of need of salvation, and a consciousness of guilt, which could never be satisfied save by his agony and death, through which sin is justly pardoned, and evil is subdued. This is the great heart-winning doctrine. Christ loves us as the Lamb, and we love him as the Lamb.

Further, marriage is the most perfect union. Surely, it is as the Lamb that Jesus is most closely joined to his people. Our Lord came very close to us when he took our nature, for thus he became bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. He came very near to us when, for this cause, he left his Father and became one flesh with his church. He could not be sinful as she was; but he did take her sins upon himself, and bear them all away, as it is written, "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." When "he was numbered with the transgressors," and when the sword of vengeance smote him in our stead, then he came nearer to us than ever he could do in the perfection of his

Incarnation. I cannot conceive of closer union than that of Christ and souls redeemed by blood. As I look at him in death, I feel forced to cry, "Surely a husband by blood art thou to me, O Jesus! Thou art joined to me by something closer than the one fact that thou art of my nature; for that nature of thine has borne my sin, and suffered the penalty of wrath on my behalf. Now art thou one with me in all things, by a union like to that which links thee with the Father." A wonderful union is thus effected by our Lord's wearing the character of the Lamb.

Once more, we never feel so one with Jesus as when we see him as the Lamb. I shall again appeal to your experience. When have you had the sweetest fellowship with Christ in all your lives? I answer on my own account— it has been when I have sung:

*"Oh, how sweet to view the flowing
Of his soul-redeeming blood,
With divine assurance knowing
He hath made my peace with God!"*

If I had my choice to-day, while abiding in this present state, to see my Lord in his glory, or on his cross, I should choose the latter. Of course, I would prefer to see his glory, and be away with him; but, while dwelling here surrounded with sin and sorrow, a sight of his griefs has the most effect upon me. "O sacred head once wounded," I long to behold thee! I never feel so close to my Lord as when I survey his wondrous cross, and see him pouring out his blood for me. I have been melted down when we have sung together those sweet lines:

*"See from his head, his hands, his feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet?*

Or thorns compose so rich a crown?"

I have almost felt myself in his arms, and like John, I have leaned on his bosom, when I have beheld his passion. I do not wonder, therefore, that since he comes closest to us as the Lamb, and since we come closest to him when we behold him in that character, he is pleased to call his highest eternal union with his church, "the marriage of the Lamb."

And O beloved, when you come to think of it, to be married to him, to be one with him, to have no thought, no object, no desire, no glory but that which dwells in him that liveth and was dead—will not this be heaven indeed, where the Lamb is the light thereof? For ever to contemplate and adore him who offered up himself without spot unto God, as our sacrifice and propitiation; this shall be an endless feast of grateful love. We shall never weary of this subject. If you see the Lord coming from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, from the winepress wherein he has trampled on his foes, you are overawed and overcome by the terror of that dread display of justice; but when you see him clad in a vesture dipped in no blood but his own, you will sing aloud evermore, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood; to thee be glory for ever and ever." I could go on singing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain" throughout all eternity. The theme has an inexhaustible interest about it: there is everything in it: justice, mercy, power, patience, love, condescension, grace and glory. All over glorious is my Lord when I behold him as a Lamb; and this shall make heaven seven times heaven to me to think that even then I shall be joined to him in everlasting bonds as the Lamb. [Here a voice from the gallery cried, "Praise the Lord!"] Yes, my friend, we will praise the Lord. "Praise ye the Lord" is the command which was heard coming out of the throne—"Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great:

for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready."

IV. Now we come to the last point, THE PREPAREDNESS OF THE BRIDE: "His wife hath made herself ready." Up till now the church has always been spoken of as his bride, now she is "his wife"—that is a deeper, dearer, more-matured word than "bride": "his wife hath made herself ready." The church has now come to the fulness of her joy, and has taken possession of her status and dower as "his wife." What does it mean—"hath made herself ready?"

It signifies, first, that she willingly and of her own accord comes to her Lord, to be his, and to be with him for ever. This she does with all her heart: "she hath made herself ready." She does not enter into this engagement with reluctance. Some unwisely speak of the grace of God, as though it were a physical force, which sets a constraint upon the will of the quickened man. Beloved, I never preach to you in that fashion. Free will is an unknown thing, except it be wrought in us by grace. Grace is the great liberating force. The will is a slave to evil, till grace comes, and makes it free to choose that which is good. No action of the soul is more free than that by which it quits sin, and closes with Christ. Then the man comes to himself. The heart is free from compulsion, when its love goes forth towards the Lord Jesus. I ask you that love him, do you feel that you are going against your will in so doing? Far from it: you wish to love him more. In the ultimate union of all the chosen with Christ, will you want any forcing to take your part in the marriage of the Lamb? Did not the words I used just now state your longings—"My heart is with him on his throne." Are you not panting to behold his face? Compulsion to a hungry man to eat would seem more likely than compulsion to be joined unto Christ. His wife hath gladly made herself ready: free grace has made her freely choose him.

Does it not mean that she has put away from herself all evil, and all connection with the corruptions of the harlot church has been destroyed? She has struggled against error, she has fought against infidelity, and both have been put down by her holy watchfulness and earnest testimony; and so she is ready for her Lord.

Does it not also mean that in the great day of the consummation the church will be one? Alas, for the divisions among us! You do not know what denomination my friend belonged to who prayed just now. Well, I shall not tell you. You could not judge from his prayer. "The saints in prayer appear as one." Denomination! A plague upon denominationalism! There should be but one denomination: we should be denominated by the name of Christ, as the wife is named by her husband's name. As long as the church of Christ has to say, "My right arm is Episcopalian, and my left arm is Wesleyan, and my right foot is Baptist, and my left foot is Presbyterian or Congregational," she is not ready for the marriage. She will be ready when she has washed out these stains, when all her members have "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." Unity is a main part of the readiness here spoken of.

I beg you to notice what the preparation was. It is described in the eighth verse: "To her was granted." I will go no further. Whatever preparation it was that she made, in whatever apparel she was arrayed, it was granted to her. Observe that the harlot church wore fine linen also, but then she had with it purple, and silk, and scarlet, and precious stones, and pearls. I do not know whence the harlot obtained her apparel, but I know where the true church found her wedding dress, for it is written, "to her was granted." This was a gift of sovereign grace, the free gift of her own Beloved: "To her was granted." She had a grant from the throne, a royal grant, an indisputable right. We also go to heaven by royal grant. We have nothing of our own to

carry us there by right, nothing of boasted merit; but to us also is granted acceptance in the Beloved. Oh, it is a glorious thing to hold your own by letters patent, under the Great Seal of heaven! When we shall be united to Jesus, the ever blessed Lamb, in endless wedlock, all our fitness to be there will be ours by free grant.

Look at the apparel of the wife, "To her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white." How simple her raiment! Only fine linen, clean and white! The more simple our worship, the better. The true church of Christ is content with white linen, and no more. She asked not for those fine things we read about in connection with the harlot. She envied not the unchaste one her harpers, and musicians, and pipers, and trumpeters: she was content with her simple harp and joyful song. She did not need all manner of vessels of ivory, and precious wood, brass and iron, and marble. She did not seek for cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, nor aught else of that finery with which people nowadays try to adorn their worship. The simpler the better. When in worship you cannot hear the voices of the people beyond the noise which might be made by the twitter of half-a-dozen sparrows, because a flood of noise from a huge organ is drowning all the praise—I think we have lost our way. The simpler the worship the better, whether in prayer or praise, or anything else. The harlot church bedecks herself with her architecture, and her millinery, and her perfumery, and her oratory, and her music; but those who would follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, will keep their worship, their practice, and their doctrine pure and simple, avoiding all the blandishments of carnal policy and human wisdom, content with the truth as it is in Jesus. What more beautiful than pure white linen?

In the Greek, our text runs thus: "Fine linen, clean and white, for fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints." Our

Revised Version has, in this case, not given us a translation, but an explanation, and that explanation is a contraction of the sense. The revisers word it, "Fine linen is the righteous acts of saints." That word "acts" is of their own insertion. The word "righteousnesses" has a fuller meaning: it is exceeding broad, and they have narrowed it, and misapplied it. We shall have a complete array of righteousnesses in Christ's righteousness active and passive—a garment for the head, and a garment for the feet, and for the loins. What righteousnesses we have! Righteousness imparted by the power of the Spirit; righteousness imputed by the decree of God. Every form of righteousness will go to make up the believer's outfit; only, all of it is granted, and none of it is of our own purchasing. We shall not have Christ's righteousness to cover up our sin, as some blasphemously say—for we shall have no sin to cover. We shall not want Christ's righteousness to make an evil heart seem pure: we shall be as perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect. Washed in the blood of the Lamb, we shall have no spot upon us or within us. We shall have a complete righteousness; and in this arrayed, we shall be covered with the beauty of holiness. This garment is most befitting, for it is "The righteousness of saints." Saints ought to have righteousness. They are themselves made holy, and therefore they ought to be adorned in visible holiness; and so they shall be.

Best of all we shall be arrayed in that day with that which pleases the Bridegroom. Do I not remember how he said, "I counsel thee to buy of me white raiment"? Yes, she has remembered his bidding. She has nothing else but that "fine linen" which is the "The righteousness of saints"; and this he delights in. She comes to the Lamb, bearing about her the result of his own passion, and of his own Spirit, and she is well pleasing in his eyes. The Lord sees in her of the travail of his soul, and he is satisfied.

I have done when I have again put this question: Do you trust the Lamb? I warn you, if you have a religion which has no blood of Christ in it, it is not worth a thought: you had better be rid of it, it will be of no use to you. I warn you, also, that unless you love the Lamb you cannot be married to the Lamb; for he will never be married to those who have no love to him. You must take Jesus as a sacrifice, or not at all. It is useless to say, "I will follow Christ's example." You will not do anything of the sort. It is idle to say, "He shall be my teacher." He will not own you for a disciple unless you will own him as a sacrifice. You must take him as the Lamb, or have done with him. If you do despite to the blood of Christ, you do despite to the whole person of Christ. Christ is nothing to you if he is not your atonement. As many of you as hope to be saved by the works of the law, or by anything else apart from his blood and righteousness, you have un-Christianized yourselves; you have no part in Jesus here, and you shall have no part in him hereafter, when he shall take to himself his own redeemed church, to be his spouse for ever and ever. God bless you, for Christ's sake.

Amen.

FIFTY-THREE
THE MARRIAGE SUPPER OF
THE LAMB

SERMON GIVEN ON AUGUST 21, 1887

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 19:9

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 41

*“And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they
which are called unto the marriage supper
of the Lamb.”*

REVELATION 19:9.

You will perceive that there was an exhortation to John to “Write.” Why was he specially to write these words down? I conceive that it was, first, because the information here recorded was valuable: “Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.” It was worth while that this new beatitude should be recorded, so the angel of God said to the apostle, “Write.” It was also to be written because of its absolute certainty: “These are the true sayings of God.” This

blessedness was not a thing to be spoken of once, and then to be forgotten; but it was to be recorded where future ages might see that it is surely so, assuredly so beyond all question. God has bidden this record to be written in black and white, yea, graven as with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever, "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb."

It was to be written, no doubt, to bring it under our consideration as a thing worthy of being weighed, a text to be read, marked, learned, and inwardly digested; not merely spoken to John by the angel of God, but written by the apostle at the express order of the Spirit of God. Lord, didst thou say to John, "Write it," and shall I not read it? Didst thou bid the beloved disciple write it, and dost thou not thereby virtually bid me consider it and remember it? Lord, by thy Spirit, write this message on my heart, "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb."

I find that my text is succeeded as well as preceded, by something remarkable: "He saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God." Lest any doubt should arise in our minds about the marriage supper of the Lamb, or about the fact that many are called to that supper, or about the blessedness of such as are called, the angel says, "These are the true sayings of God." Some things appear to be too good to be true. We frequently meet with sinners, under a sense of guilt, who are staggered by the greatness of God's mercy. The light of the gospel has been too bright for them; they "could not see for the glory of that light," as Paul said in describing the appearance of Christ to him when on the road to Damascus. So, "to make assurance doubly sure," that we may not question its truth because of its greatness, we have this solemn declaration specially certified by order of the Lord, under the hand and seal of the Spirit of God: "These are the true sayings of God." O sirs, the Lord Christ will come again, he will come to gather

together his people, and to make them for ever blessed; and happy will you be if you are among that chosen company! If you shall meet the King of kings with joyful confidence, you shall be blessed indeed.

You noticed that I read parts of two chapters before I came to my text; and I did it for this purpose. The false harlot-church is to be judged, and then the true Church of Christ is to be acknowledged and honoured with what is called a marriage supper. The false must be put away before the true can shine out in all its lustre. Oh, that Christ would soon appear, to drive falsehood from off the face of the earth! At present, it seems to gather strength, and to spread till it darkens the sky, and turns the sun into darkness, and the moon into blood. Oh, that the Lord would arise, and sweep away the deadly errors which now pollute the very air! We long for the time when the powers of darkness shall be baffled, and the pure everlasting light shall triumph over all. We do not know when it shall be;—

*“But, come what may to stand in the way,
That day the world shall see,”*

when the truth shall vanquish error, and when the true Church shall be revealed in all her purity and beauty as the Bride of Christ, and the apostate church shall be put away once for all and for ever. Time rolls wearily along just now, apparently, and some hearts grow heavy and sad; but let us take courage. The morning cometh as well as the night; and there are good days, not so far off as we have sometimes fancied; and some of us may yet live to see times which, shall make us cry, “Lord, now lettest thou thy servants depart in peace, for our eyes have seen thy salvation.” Whether we live till Christ comes again, or whether we fall asleep in him, many of us know that we shall sit down at the great wedding feast in the end of

the days, and we shall partake of the supper of the Lamb in the day of his joy and glory. We are looking across the blackness and darkness of the centuries into that promised millennial age wherein we shall rejoice with our Lord with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

I. I will not longer delay you from the text; and in meditating upon this august marriage festival, I want you to notice, first of all, THE DESCRIPTION OF THE BRIDEGROOM.

There is no marriage without a bridegroom. There is no marriage of the Church without the appearance of Christ; and therefore he must be manifested. He must come out of the ivory palaces wherein he hideth himself to-day, and he must appear in his glory; and when he shall appear, what shall be his title? Notice it: "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb."

This term — "*the Lamb*" — seems to be the special name of Christ which John was accustomed to use. I suppose he heard it first from that other John, called the Baptist, when he said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Isaiah had compared the Christ to a lamb brought to the slaughter; but he had not really called him "the Lamb of God." This beloved John, who know the Master better than anyone else did, seemed to love constantly to call him by this most expressive name.

Now, if in any Book of the Bible we might have expected that our Lord would not have been called the Lamb, it would have been the Book of the Revelation; it might seem as if the name "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" might appropriately have been used every time, and the name of "the Lamb" have been dropped. The name "the Lamb" seemed suitable for Jesus here below, despised and rejected of men, led to the slaughter, dumb and patient beneath the hands of cruel men. The name "the Lamb" seemed suitable for Gethsemane, and Gabbatha, and

Golgotha; but John calls the Saviour by this name very many times all through this Book of the Revelation. He writes constantly about the Lamb, the Lamb in the midst of the throne, the Lamb leading his people to living fountains of water; and now the angel tells him to write about the marriage supper of the Lamb.

This is the more remarkable because, at first sight, it may seem incongruous to blend those two things together,— the Lamb and a marriage supper. But the incongruity of figures must sometimes be allowed in order to make more apparent some master-truth which must not and cannot be veiled for the sake of correct rhetoric. It sometimes happens that language becomes a burden to thought; great thoughts will break the backs of words, and crush them into the dust. So it happens that comparisons and metaphors crack and break, like rotten wood in the wind, under the stress of some great master-thought which rules the writer's mind. It matters not whether it is congruous in figure, it is congruous enough in fact that the wedding at the last should be the marriage of the Lamb.

What do I infer from this? I gather, in a word, just this, that Christ anywhere, even in his highest glory, still wishes us to regard him as the sacrifice for sin. He desires to be viewed by us in his character as the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world. This is a character which he never lays aside, and it is as the Lamb that he will manifest himself in the consummation of all things when his Church is perfected.

First, *as the Lamb, he is the one everlasting sacrifice for sin.* Where is the lamb that God has provided for a burnt-offering? It is Jesus. Where is the morning and evening lamb to take away Israel's guilt? It is Jesus. Where is the lamb that bleeds and dies, that with its blood the lintel and the two side posts may be smeared to secure the inmates of the house from the destroying angel in Egypt? It is Jesus. In the whole of his life,

and in his death, he was no lion, no beast of prey; but he was the gentle, suffering, sacrificial Victim, dying that we may not die, presenting himself a sacrifice acceptable unto God.

Now, because Christ was the Lamb, suffering for sin, and because he delights to remember that he was our sacrifice, therefore *he is seen in that capacity in the day of the gladness of his heart*. He links the memory of his grief with the manifestation of his glory; and as he was a Lamb to redeem his Church, so does he appear as a Lamb in the marriage supper of his glory. One reason why he does this is because he is specially glorious in the character of the Lamb of God. I cannot conceive of our Lord Jesus Christ as ever being less than infinitely glorious; but, dear friends, if there is ever a time when we can appreciate the splendour of his character more fully than at other times, it is when he is on the cross, when he dies, "the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." Tell me not of all the glory which surrounds him now in the midst of the throne; I cannot conceive any glory exceeding in brightness the glory of his self-denial, the glory of his taking upon himself the form of a servant, and, being found in fashion as a man, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. The glory of men consists in what they are prepared to suffer for others; the glory of a king must he, not in the crowns he wears, but in what he does for his subjects; and Christ's glory is most seen in his sacrifice for sinners. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends;" but Christ laid down his life for his enemies. When the Lord Jesus Christ put on the bloody shirt in Gethsemane, when he bedecked himself with the five bright rubies of his wounds, when he was adorned with the crown of thorns, and, last of all, when he was decorated with that robe of blood as the soldier pierced his side, then it was that he was more illustrious than at any time before or since in the eyes of those who think aright. This is the star in his

sky, nay, the sun that eclipses all the stars, that Jesus loved, pitied, and had compassion even to the death upon the sons of men. So, in the day of his marriage, he comes out again in this highest and noblest of characters; glorious specially as a Lamb, it is as a Lamb that he celebrates the marriage supper with his Bride, the Church.

Brethren, I think that it is very appropriate for Christ to appear in glory as a Lamb, because *it is as the Lamb that he has most fully displayed his love to his Church*, to which he is espoused, and to which he is to be married at that last great day. Beloved, the marriage supper is a feast of love; there, love is at home. So Jesus, that he may reveal himself in his love best of all, appears as a bleeding sacrifice on the day of his love's triumph. I do not know how to talk about this great theme; but this truth rests in my heart, and makes me feel more glad than I can tell. It lies like a cake of sweet perfume upon the altar of my soul, and burns there with the soft lambent flame of love; and I rejoice to know that, in the day when Jesus takes his Church by the hand, and leads her home to his Father's house, he will appear in that character in which he most of all has shown his love to his beloved. You see most of his love when you see most of his griefs, and most of his condescension; and therefore in that character does he appear at his marriage supper.

There is one other thought before I leave this first point. *It is as the Lamb that Christ is best loved of our souls*. At any rate, you feel your affections most drawn out toward him who suffered in your stead; tell me, ye who know him most, ye who love him best, is it not so? You have seen him on his throne, but you have fallen at his feet as dead, for the sight has been too much for you; but when you have seen him on the cross, oh, then your heart has melted while your Beloved has spoken to you, and you have said, "He has won my heart; now he has completely mastered me; I must love him now." So then, you

see, on the day of his marriage, when he would be best loved, Christ comes unto his Church robed in that garment in which he appears most lovely in her sight; and he draws out at that marriage supper, more fully than ever he did before, all the love of all his redeemed for whom he laid down his life.

Now, ye who care not for my Lord as a Substitute and a Sacrifice, will you be at the marriage supper when he appears as the Lamb? It is as the Lamb of God that you reject him; you are willing to take him, *you* say, as a Teacher, or as an Exemplar, but as the Sacrifice for sin you will not have him. Then, neither will he have you. In that great day, as you have disowned the vicarious sacrifice, he who was that sacrifice will disown you. There will be no marriage between your soul and Christ if you will not have him as the Lamb, for that marriage feast is to be the marriage of the Lamb, and of none else. As long as this tongue can move, and these lips can speak, I will preach nothing to you but Jesus Christ and him crucified; that he, who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. I know no Saviour but that Christ, "who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree," and who, "when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high," and now in the glory bears the marks of the great propitiation by which his people are saved.

II. But now, secondly, I have to speak a little upon THE MEANING OF THE MARRIAGE SUPPER: "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb." What will that marriage supper be?

There will come a time when all God's redeemed shall be saved. There will come a day when all who have died shall have been raised again from the tomb, and those who remain alive shall have been changed, so that their corruption shall have put on incorruption, and mortality shall have put on

immortality. *Then will the Church be perfect and complete*; no one member will be missing. There will be no spot or wrinkle remaining in her. Then it shall come to pass that Christ will celebrate this marriage supper, which will be *the bringing of the people of God into the closest and happiest union with Christ their Lord in glory*. Even now, the Lord Jesus Christ is no stranger to some of us, and we are not strangers to him; yet there shall come a day when we shall see him face to face, and then we shall know him with a clearer and fuller knowledge than is possible to us to-day. What that bliss will be, I cannot tell. Oh, the ineffable brightness when we shall see the face of Jesus! Oh, the unspeakable sweetness when we shall hear his voice! Oh, the amazing bliss when he shall manifest himself to us in all his glory! And there will come such a day for all whom he has redeemed, for all who trust him, and rest in his atoning sacrifice. That will be the marriage supper of the Lamb.

That feast will be, like most other marriage suppers, *the fulfilment of long expectation*. Our Lord has waited long for his perfected Church. He espoused himself to her before ever the earth was; but there was much to be done ere she was prepared for the marriage. The Bridegroom, too, had to leave his Father, and become one with his Bride by taking upon himself our humanity. For our sake, he did quit the thrones and royalties of heaven that he might be bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh; and here was he born, and here he lived, and here he died. But still the Bride was not ready; and it is not till you come to this chapter that you read, "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." Souls have to be saved, new-created, blood-washed, sanctified, perfected, and the whole of them must be gathered to make up the body of Christ's Spouse; and when that is done, and she is all complete, the expectations of the Christ will be fulfilled at that marriage supper. O beloved, you do not know the longings of the heart of

Christ for that day of glory! For this he lived; for this he died; for this he continually pleads that all for whom he shed his precious blood might be his in that day. That day is fast coming, and when it arrives, then will be the wedding feast above.

Then will be also the day of *the open publication of the great fact of mutual love and union*. At this moment, Christ loves his Church, and he is one with her; but the world as a whole does not know it. It does not know either him or her, nor does it care about them; but the day shall come when Christ will bring his hidden people into the light of day. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father;" and then shall the Christ himself also be manifested, though long hidden. Oh, what a day that will be when the eyes of the entire universe shall be turned in one direction, and the glorious Christ, in the splendour of his manhood and of his Godhead, shall take the hand of his redeemed Church, and before men and angels and devils declare himself to be one with her for ever and for ever! That will be the beginning of the marriage supper of the Lamb; it will be the publication to all of the great fact of mutual love and union.

Moreover, the picture of a marriage supper is intended to set forth *the overflowing of mutual delight and joy*. There is too much joy for two; they are so happy, that they invite others to come in, and share the banquet. So, in those days, how delighted this blessed Christ and his Church will be with one another! How the Church will rejoice in him! How he will rejoice in the Church! What hallelujahs will they raise to him; and oh, with what delight will he look upon all his people, and see in them neither spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing, because his blood has cleansed them, and his Spirit has perfectly sanctified them! Of old it was written, "The Lord thy God In the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee

with singing." But what will that rest of love be, and what that singing of the Christ over his blood-bought ones, when they are all before him, and all made like unto himself to reflect the glory of God!

Brethren, to add just one other thought, that marriage feast will be *the grandest display of Christ's magnificent munificence in a banquet*. If people do ever make a little more show than on other occasions, it is usually at a marriage feast; and oh, what a show Christ will make that day! Depend upon it, there will be no little show when he shall come in the glory of his Father, with all the holy angels with him, and with the very clouds of heaven to be the dust of his feet. Then shall his Church come before him in all the glory he has given to her. Her raiment shall be of wrought gold. There is no lustre, no beauty, no excellence, that can be compared with that which Christ will put upon his Church. She will admire him, and he will admire her. She will bless him, and he will bless her. Oh, I talk but feebly about lofty things that need a poet's eye and a poet's tongue! Nay, put away your poetry; the soberest language that can be uttered might better fit a theme in which the highest sublimities must be simplicities. I do want you all to believe that there is to be a day when all the chosen seed, blood-bought and saved, will make one body, and Christ shall come, and glorify them with himself in a union that shall never know an end, though the ages roll along for ever and for over.

III. Now, thirdly, I must speak a little about THE PERSONS WHO ARE CALLED TO THIS SUPPER. Who are the people who are called to this great marriage feast?

In one sense, you are all called to it. O my hearers, there is a call of the gospel to every one of you! We are bidden to preach it to every creature under heaven, and we do preach it, leaving none of you out. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be

saved." The call, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh," is to the foolish virgins as well as to the wise; and if you do not come, it is not because you were never invited and never entreated to come to Christ. By the Spirit of the living God, I do implore you men and women to seek the Saviour's face. I may never address you all again, as perhaps I have never addressed some of you before; but by him that cometh in the clouds of heaven I do entreat you to fly to Jesus the great and only Saviour. Seek his grace now, that you may see his face with joy in the great day of his appearing.

But this is not exactly what the text means, for, although there is a blessedness in being called, it curdles into a curse if, being called, sinners refuse to come to the Saviour. Who, then, are they who are specially called to this marriage feast? Well, first, they are *those who are so called as to accept the invitation*. Have you come to Jesus? Are you trusting him? Will you have him? Does your heart say, "Ay"? Then, he is yours. There was never any unwillingness in Christ to receive the guilty. The unwillingness is in you; and if the unwillingness has gone from you, since it never was in him, take him, and have him for ever. Take him and have him to-night. When Abraham's servant wanted to take Rebekah to Isaac, her mother and brother said to her, "Wilt thou go with this man?" So would I say to any young man or woman I may be addressing, "Wilt thou go with Christ? Wilt thou have Christ?" If so, he will have thee. If thou art willing to have him, thou art among those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

To help thee to judge thyself, here is another test. *Those who are called to that marriage supper love the Bridegroom*. He will have no enemies at his banquet. Dost thou love Jesus? Does thy heart leap at the sound of his name? Timid trembling woman, dost thou love him? Thou canst not speak for him, but thou couldst die for him. Ah, well, if thy heart goes after him,

his heart has long ago gone after thee, and thou shalt be at the marriage supper! I tell thee more, thou shalt be a part and parcel of his Bride in the day of his appearing.

Again, *those who are called to this supper are made ready.* Are you made ready? You remember that the man who came to the wedding feast was bidden to put on a wedding garment; hast thou put on the righteousness of Christ? Has Christ put on thee his sanctification? Art thou changed in heart? Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Has the grace of God renewed thee? Then thou art one of those who shall come to the wedding, among the blessed who are called to that great marriage feast.

Thou mayest help to judge thyself by answering one more question. *Hast thou any desire to go to that marriage feast?* Dost thou look for Christ's coming? There are some who are altogether unconcerned about it; they do not care about Christ or his coming, it is all nothing to them, an airy nothing. O my hearer, I trust that thou art not of that opinion! But if thou art looking for and hasting unto the coming of the Son of God, if thy faith is resting on his first coming, and thy hope is in his second coming, if thou seest thy sin put away by his coming as a sin-offering, and then thy sorrow put away by his coming as thy Bridegroom, then, dear heart, be sure that thou wouldst not have these drawings towards him unless he had drawn thee to himself. He is drawing thee; therefore, run after him.

IV. Now, lastly, let us think of THE BLESSEDNESS WHICH IS ASCRIBED TO THOSE WHO ARE CALLED TO THIS MARRIAGE SUPPER.

I know that I am speaking to many who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb; and I want you, my dear hearers, now to enjoy yourselves, for *you have a prospect which blesses you even now.* If you are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb, the text says that you are blessed; and truly blessed you

are: "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb." If you had an invitation to see the Queen to-morrow, some of you who are wonderfully loyal would think a great deal of it, and you would be saying to yourselves, "Well, we are going home to-night to a very narrow room in a very poor cottage; but we have something great in prospect to-morrow." And oh, do think of this, you who are poor, you who are pained, you who are very weak, you who are cast down, within a short time your eyes "shall see the King in his beauty, and the land that is very far off." It may be only a few days, or weeks, or months, certainly only a few years at most, and we shall share all the glory that awaits the Church; and the glory of our clear Lord, who loved us, and gave himself for us, will be ours, and ours for ever. I know that you put this great event far away, and say that it is a long way off; but it is not, it is close at hand. Suppose it were not to come for a thousand years; yet what is that but the twinkling of an eye, very soon over? The older men get, the shorter time seems to be. When I was a child, a week seemed to be a very long time. You who have grown old know that a year seems to come and go before you are aware of it. You can say with Job, "My days are swifter than a post: they flee away." Yet what matters it if we have to wait fifty thousand years for our bliss? We who have believed in Christ have the absolute certainty that we shall one day stand in the midst of the splendour of Christ's wedding feast. The nuptials of a king are usually something very grand; but what will the marriage supper of the King of kings and Lord of lords be,— when he who is the Son of the Highest shall take to himself his fit companion,— when it shall no more be said of the man Christ Jesus that there was found no help meet for him, but when he shall take his Church, made out of his own flesh, and shall welcome her unto himself to go from him no more for ever?

I shall be a part of that Church, and you who believe will

be a part of that Church; *and we shall all have great honour in being called to such a future.* What bliss to be there! What joy to be there, not as spectators, but as part of the Bride that shall then be taken by her Husband! My soul, thou shalt swim in felicity, thou shalt dive in seas of inconceivable delight by reason of thy union with Christ, and thy delight in him, and his delight in thee. I know no better idea of heaven than that, to be eternally content with Christ, and Christ to be eternally content with me; and all this will happen within a very little time. Therefore, lay aside your cares, dismiss your fears, murmur no more. Such a destiny awaits you that you may well be content. I have heard that, when Queen Elizabeth once carried the crown, while she was a young princess, she found it heavy as she bore it before her sister; but one said to her, "You will like it better when you wear it yourself." So, we have to carry every day a weight for Christ; but oh, when the crown is put upon our own heads, and we are in paradise with him, we shall forget the light afflictions which were but for a moment, as we enter into the enjoyment of the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. I want you, if you can, just to enjoy yourselves while you think of the honour which is to be put upon all Christ's people in being married to him.

*"One with Jesus,
By eternal union one,"*

partakers of his name, his estate, his glory, himself, he shall make us to sit with him upon his throne, even as he has overcome, and sits down with his Father upon his throne.

Recollect, too, we shall be blessed at the marriage supper because *no fear will mingle with our enjoyment.* It has been well observed that, if men and women could know all that will happen to them in the course of their married life, they might,

perhaps, not think a wedding day such a happy day after all. So soon may love grow cold, so often may promises be broken, and unkindness take the place of affection, that it is but a dubious joy that surrounds the wedding feast; but once with Jesus at the banquet above, there will be no such fear. Here, I may have a fear lest my love to him should not be true, lest, after all, my following of him should be but temporary, and not the consequence of the new life within; but once up there, we shall raise no more questions, we shall be exposed to no more dangers, we shall no more dread backsliding and apostacy. Once there, we shall be—

*“Far from a world of grief and sin,
With God eternally shut in.”*

Once there, every pain and tear and fear will have gone for ever; that will be a glorious wedding feast indeed.

My beloved hearer, *will you be there?* If there were no hell, the loss of heaven would be hell. If there were no Tophet, to have missed Christ's wedding feast were a Gehenna black enough. If there were no worm that dieth not, and no fire that never can be quenched, this were damnation deep enough—to have missed the kisses of Christ's mouth, and the joy of the everlasting oneness in his glory. Do not miss it; I charge you, do not miss it. When some of us shall be flying through the gates of the New Jerusalem, I trust that we shall hear you as we pass by, and pausing for a moment to ask, “Who is there?” you will answer, “I am here, brought to know Christ by your ministry.” That shall make another heaven to add to our own heaven; every one that we shall see there, converted by the preaching of the cross by our lips, or through the printed sermons, shall multiply our bliss, and make us yet happier, and for ever and ever happier still in your happiness and joy.

I have finished my discourse, but I do not like, somehow, to go home with this thought in my mind,— *perhaps some of you will miss this bliss!* The muster-roll will be read; but your name will not be there! Can you bear that thought? Remember that, if you are not blessed, you are cursed; if you find not heaven, you are lost for ever. You have often joined with God's people in singing,—

*"I love to meet among them now,
Before thy gracious feet to bow,
Though vilest of them all:
But can I bear the piercing thought—
What if my name should be left out,
When thou for them shalt call?"*

You cannot be left outside the wedding feast if you have trusted in Jesus; then, trust him at once; rest in that Lamb who will be your Bridegroom, and at whose marriage supper you shall be present to praise the glory of his grace for ever and ever.

Amen.

FIFTY-FOUR
THE TRUE SAYINGS OF GOD

SERMON #3144

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 19:9

PUBLISHED IN 1909.

“These are the true sayings of God.”

REVELATION 19:9

BEFORE I use our text in a larger sense, it is due to our reverence for the Word of God to expound this short sentence in its immediate connection, for the angel here declared that certain things which had been spoken in John’s hearing were “the true sayings of God.” You will observe that he bade the Apostle “write” what he had heard. It was so weighty that John was not to trust it simply to his memory. It was so necessary that it should be remembered that he had to record it so that it might be handed down to future generations. “Write,” said the angel, and then, as if to give John reasons for writing—reasons

why these Truths of God should be permanently recorded—he added, “These are the true sayings of God.”

What were those true sayings? I shall not dwell long upon them, but just hastily allude to them. The first which appears in this Chapter is the great fact that God will judge and condemn the harlot church. There are two churches in the world today. The one is the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ composed of Believers in Him who worship God in spirit and in truth, whose creed is the Word of God and whose power for life and service is the indwelling Spirit of God. There is another church—you know what a shameful name is applied to her in this Chapter—and you also know that she deserves to be called by that name for she has, indeed, corrupted the earth with her fornication. In the old Jewish time, idolatry was called spiritual harlotry—and there are millions of idolaters daily bowing down before images, rags and bones that ought long ago to have been buried in the earth. The Church of Rome seems to have gathered up all the relics of the idolatries of other ages and then to have capped them by saying that a substance which is only bread before the “priest” consecrates it, becomes God afterwards and then the idolater eats his god—a monstrous piece of blasphemy and superstition unworthy of Dahomey itself! That is the harlot church which God will surely judge. And when He does, terrible will be that judgment! Among the tremendous things of the Last Day will be the total overthrow and utter destruction of this “mother of harlots and abominations of the earth.” Come you out from her, O you people, lest you be partakers of her plagues, for terrible will her plagues be in the day when the Lord shall avenge upon her the blood of all His saints and martyrs whom she has slain. This, then, is one of “the true sayings of God.”

The next true saying is concerning the glorious and universal reign of the great God. For John “heard, as it were,

the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigns." There has been a long war between God and idols of various names. Among the ancient idols were Baal and Ashtaroth, and Dagon—but all had to bow down before Jehovah. Then Jupiter, and Saturn, and Venus and Mars were worshipped as deities by the heathen. And now many gods and lords still dominate a large part of the human intellect. But they are all doomed to fall and the one invisible Creator of Heaven and earth, almighty and eternal, will yet reign throughout the whole universe without a rival! And then shall be heard again that great shout that John heard during the wondrous Revelation in the Isle of Patmos. "Alleluia: for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns." Let us never imagine that God's Throne is in peril! Let us never fancy that the Truth of God can be defeated. Truth is God's daughter and He covers her with His great shield and fights for her with His invincible Omnipotence! Do not tremble for the Ark of God—do not despair, or even despond—the Lord will win the victory over all the powers of evil! This, also, is one of "the true sayings of God."

The next true saying was this, that Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God—so called because of the atoning Sacrifice which He presented on Calvary—will have a full reward for all His sufferings—"For the marriage of the Lamb [See Sermon #2096, Volume 35—"THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at .] is come, and His wife has made herself ready...Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper [See Sermon #2428, Volume 41—"THE MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at .] Jesus Christ came into this world to find His beloved ones. And He found them in bondage—and having taken upon

Himself their nature, He became their next of kin—and then, according to the ancient Law, He redeemed them and bought them unto Himself—and He has espoused unto Himself all those that trust in Him. All who believe in Him, in whatever visible Church they may be, make up the one Church of Jesus Christ which He has redeemed from among men with His precious blood. And in the latter days He will have that Church to be His reward. At present, Christ has but a poor reward for all His sufferings. Comparatively few reverence Him. His people are a feeble and scattered folk, but there are days coming in which the Lord Jesus Christ shall have all whom He bought with His blood. He shall have for Himself all whom He came to save. He shall not be disappointed—"He shall not fail, nor be discouraged." The Lord shall abundantly reward Him for all His agonies. "He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied." This also is one of "the true sayings of God."

This true saying also declares that in the latter days, when Christ comes again to this earth, He will find His Church here. He will bring with Him a part of that Church and He will find here part of that Church which shall be His bride forever and forever. A description of the purity which is her glory is given in the verse which precedes our text—"And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." So that the Church of Christ will be arrayed as brides should be in the garments of light and purity. She will also be chastely arrayed—not like the harlot church, in purple and scarlet—but "in fine linen clean and white." Christ's Church shall be a pure Church, a simple Church, a humble Church and yes, for all that, a beautiful Church in the eyes of Jesus Christ! She shall be a perfect Church and her beauty shall be her righteousness. And where shall she obtain that righteousness? It is said that it shall be

given to her. It will not be any righteousness which she has manufactured, for each of

her members has the same desire as Paul had when he wrote, "That I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." The Church of God, then, when Christ receives her as His bride, will be dressed in the imputed righteousness which comes to her by faith! It is the righteousness which Jesus Christ spent His life to work out, the righteousness which never had a stain upon it, for Jesus Christ is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. Oh, blessed be God for this glorious fact that Jesus Christ will have a Church of this kind forever! This also is one of "the true sayings of God."

The practical point for us to remember is this—let us endeavor to get as far as we can from the meretricious church described in the 18th Chapter. If you read that Chapter through, you cannot mistake the church to which it refers, for the portrait is a photograph! Get as far as you can away from that mystery of iniquity! Shun Sacramentarianism as you would shun the plague! Abhor the priesthood as you would the arch-fiend himself! Turn away from all idolatry and worship God alone. Keep to the Bible and forsake everything that is of man's invention. Cleave to the simple teaching of God's Word in Doctrine, in practice, in the ordinances and in everything. Cling, in fact, to the pure Church of Jesus Christ. If you ask me where you can find that Church, I may tell you that you can find part of it here and parts of it scattered all over the land, and over a great part of the world. Believers in Christ are known to the Lord, for He knows them that are His. They are not as others are, for they have received an inner spiritual light and life. They no longer care for the world, nor for the world's reli-

gion. They seek to walk where Jesus Christ marked the way with His own pierced feet—"These are they who follow the Lamb wherever He goes." This is the Church that loves the righteousness of Christ, the Church that preaches up Christ, her great Husband and Lord, the Church that magnifies His atoning Sacrifice, the Church that believes in His merits—not in human merits—and that trusts in His death and not in anything that men can do to save themselves! Cling to that Church, Beloved! Be numbered with it, give no sleep to your eyes, no slumber to your eyelids till you know that you are among those people to whom is granted the privilege of wearing the righteousness of Christ as "fine linen, clean and white." The Lord grant that in that dividing day, not one member of this assembly may be driven away with the beast and the false prophet, but may we all be found with the bride, the true, chosen, chaste, pure Church of Jesus Christ that has endeavored to follow Him through evil report and good report, never bowing at the feet of kings, never accepting their proffered gifts, but remaining true to God and Christ all her days!

Having spoken thus upon the context of this passage, I desire now to address you, for a short time, upon these words as they refer to the entire canon of Scripture. I may take this blessed Book, this whole Inspired Bible, and say of its contents, "These are the true sayings of God." I want to make two remarks. The first is that some of these sayings have already been proven to be true. .

1. First, then, SOME OF THE GREAT SAYINGS IN THIS BOOK WE HAVE PROVEN TO BE TRUE. There is nothing like tasting, and handling, and trying, and proving for ourselves what we find in the Scriptures!

Among other things, this Book says that sin is an evil and a bitter thing. Some of us have proven that to be true, for sin became, when we were awakened by God's Spirit, our plague, our torment, our curse—and to this hour, though God has forgiven the sins of as many of us as have believed in Jesus Christ, we never sin without suffering injury as the result of it. I ask any child of God here whether he ever was a real gainer by sin. Was sin ever anything to you, Beloved, but a loss—an evil through and through? Have you not had to smart for it many and many a time? And do you not say, "Of all the evil things that ever came from Hell, there is none that can match sin"? Yes, we have proven that this saying of God is true.

But more pleasant to talk of is another true saying of God which tells us that the blood of Jesus Christ speaks peace to the conscience. This Book tells us that the blood of Jesus speaks better things than that of Abel. It tells us that, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." I put the question to those who have been justified by faith—those who have tested the power of the precious blood of Christ—has it not given you peace with God? My witness is that I never knew what peace of conscience meant until I learned what the Savior's blood had done for me. There is no peace like the peace that comes from trusting in Jesus! It is "the peace of God, which passes all understanding," which keeps our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. No, more—the precious blood of Jesus, when it is applied to the heart by the Holy Spirit, not only gives peace, but it gives a Divine exhilaration and sacred joy, as the Word says, "We also joy in God, through our Lord

Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the Atonement.” I appeal to your experience—is it not so? Have you not proven that saying of God to be a true saying? Oh, yes! There are scores and hundreds, and even thousands here who can repeat this saying and add, “Verily, we know it to be true in our own souls!”

Further, God has told us in His Word that there is a cleansing power in faith, and hope, and love, and all the other-Christian Graces. “This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.” “Every man that has this hope in him purifies himself.” I put it to you who have faith and hope—have you not always found that in proportion as you have these Graces in active exercise, you can conquer sin? Perhaps you have some besetting sin. If so, have you not always been able to tread it under your feet when you have stood at the foot of the Cross? When you have been full of love to Jesus, have you not also been most victorious over your inward corruptions, and most steadfast in resisting outward temptations? I know it is so! And there are some of us in whom the Grace of God has worked such great wonders—changing us from what we once were, turning us inside out, making us such new creatures—that if we were to meet our old selves tomorrow we would not know ourselves! When men tell us that the Gospel is not the power of God unto salvation, we ask them how it is that, every day in the week we hear of drunkards reclaimed, the unchaste made pure, thieves made honest and persons of detestable temper made gentle and amiable? And how it is that we so often hear of the conversion of a husband and father—and that the wife and children at home bear witness that the conversion is no sham but has made the cottage to be no longer a little Hell, but more like a Heaven upon earth? We say that the Doctrine which can make such changes in men cannot be an untrue Doctrine!

When I have been troubled with skepticism, I have had to

cure myself in this way. I have stood and looked up to the starry vault of Heaven and I have said, "Well, one thing I am clear about and cannot doubt, namely, that there is a God. All these wondrous worlds did not grow—somebody made them. And there is another thing about which I am clear—and that is that I love this God, whoever He is, and that I believe Him to be a pure and holy Being! And I want to be the same as He is and whatever side He is on, I am on His side! I feel an honor and reverence for Him and desire to follow Him in that which is good and that which is true." Then I say to myself, "Did I always feel like that?" And I answer, "No, I did not. Now that which makes me range myself side by side with God for that which is good and true—that which makes me love God cannot be a lie—it must be true! And as it was the Gospel of Jesus Christ that worked that change in my soul, that Gospel is true!" And so I get back again on firm rocky ground for my own soul to rest upon. And what I have said about myself is the witness of all who know the Lord. Their faith in God has had a sanctifying influence upon them and so they know, in their own experience, that this saying of God is indeed true!

Another of "the true sayings of God" is this. He has said, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." We have done as He bade us and so we have proved the efficacy of prayer. It is all very well to sneer at answers to prayer, as some have done, and to propose various tests which none could accept unless they were idiots—but the question cannot be disposed of in that way. There are honest people about by the thousands who swear that God does hear their prayers. Not hear prayer? If any man were to say to me, "You have no eyes, you have no head, you have no arms, you have no legs," I would say to him, "I don't know how I can convince you that I have all these parts of the human body if you look at me, and then repeat your assertion, but I am abso-

lutely certain that I have all these things. And if anyone says to me, "God has not heard your prayers," I answer, "Why, He hears them every day! I receive answers to prayer so constantly that I cannot doubt the fact any more than I can doubt my own existence." And I am not a solitary one in this matter. I am less than the least of all God's servants—and there are many men who are mighty in prayer, men who have their will of God, who go to Him in secret and ask what they will—and it is given to them. I could mention their names, but I will not. But even we who are among the feeblest of the Lord's people can tell of many answers to prayer that we have received. Many persons write to ask me to pray for certain special cases. I do not know why they do so, for my prayers can have no more effect than their own. And I often receive letters containing grateful thanks for answers that have been given to prayers that I have thus put up for others—and all these people are not fools! Some of them are such intelligent persons that they are regarded as leaders in their various circles! And others of them have, at any rate, managed to lead honest, sober, consistent Christian lives. And they believe that if they can join their prayers with those of another Brother in Christ, the Lord will grant their requests—and He does so constantly! They are not deceived by their own fancies or imaginations. Some people say, "They are mere coincidences which you call answers to prayer." Well, call them coincidences if you like, but to us they are no such thing whatever they may be to you! And while we pray and the answer comes—whether by a coincidence or not, it will not matter much to us—as long as we do really receive the answer and are made to rejoice in our souls, and to bless God for hearing our supplications! We have again and again proved that there is a God that hears prayer—and the promise to hear and answer prayer is among "the true sayings of God."

Once again, we know that it is according to the teaching of

God's Word that faith will sustain His people in the time of trouble and trial. This Truth we have, ourselves, proven and we have seen it illustrated in other Christians. That same sustaining power is promised to us in the hour of death. "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you." David said, "Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for You are with me." Now, if there is ever a time when a man is honest, one would think it is when he lies face to face with death! People cannot usually play the hypocrite then, though there have been some daring enough to do even that, but, for the most part, men are startled out of mere fancies when they come to the reality of departure out of this world. How fares it with Christians when they are about to die? Why, Beloved, we are not speaking about dreams, but of solid facts that we daily verify in our visitations of our flock when we say that they die joyfully! One of our dear Sisters who was known to some of you, has just been called Home. Through a long period of acute pain which rendered her condition unusually distressing, her joy and peace were almost too seraphic to be talked about! When I met some of her friends in the house, they said to me, "Well, Sir, we have derived more spiritual benefit in sitting here talking with our friend than we have got from any sort of religious exercise." Words have fallen from that humble woman's lips that would read like poetry—joyous words between the gasps for breath! And wonderful anticipations of the Glory Land have been given to her in the midst of much physical weakness. And when we speak thus of one of our members, we may say the same of hundreds of them, for it is the usual experience with them on their deathbeds. I wish more of you could see them die and learn the way in which a Christian can expire. I always think, when I come away from the deathbed of a child of God, that I have added to my previous

stack of facts proving the faithfulness of my God! I would believe the Bible without a single fact to back it up, but there is a vast quantity of external as well as internal evidences of the truth of the Scriptures. I would believe my God if He never gave me anything to see with my eyes or to hear with my ears. His own Word should be enough for me, but these blessed sounds and scenes, these cheering sights and holy triumphs make it not merely a matter of faith to believe the Gospel, but also a matter of common sense! It seems impossible to doubt when you see the evident power there is about true godliness and the majestic might that dwells in faith to strengthen the weak against the last grim foe. Yes, we have proven many of these things to be “the true sayings of God.”

Before I leave this point, I want to urge all Believers always to treat the Bible as if it were all true. Do not let any of it seem to be a romance to you, but regard it all as real and true. I wish people were more businesslike in dealing with the Bible and that they would use more common sense with regard to it. We sometimes fail to use it as if we really believed it. Some persons appear to imagine that the excellence of their prayer consists in its length—but if they had more real belief in prayer, it would probably not be so long. Whenever I go to a bank with a check, I pass it to the clerk at the counter, take up the cash he gives me and go about my business. That is how I like to pray. I take to the Lord one of His promises and I say to Him, “Lord, I believe Your promise and I believe that You will fulfill it to me.” And then I go my way knowing that I have the answer to my petition, or that it will come in due time. To kneel down for a certain specified period and pour out a long string of selected sentences would seem to me a mere performance—and I would get nothing by it. “He that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.” Do not let your praying be a mere ecclesiastical or religious

engagement! Go to God as your Father and your Friend, fully convinced that your prayer will be answered. Thousands of prayers are never answered because those who present them do not expect that they will be answered. If a man prays to God and does not believe that God will answer him, He will not answer him. We must, without wavering, believe that God will hear us—and then He must hear us. Note that I say “must.” But “must” is for the King! Yes, but He has bound Himself by His own Word—“What things soever you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them and you shall have them.” These are Christ’s own words, not mine! And their meaning lies upon the very surface. Let the Christian pray in faith and then he will find that God will never run back from His Word, but will keep His promise to all His believing people!

II. My second point was to be that THERE ARE SOME THINGS WHICH WE CANNOT PROVE JUST YET, BUT THEY ARE TRUE, FOR ALL THAT.

Now let me tell you what will come true one of these days. Jesus Christ will come back to this earth. That same Jesus who went up from the top of Mount Olivet, will so come in like manner as He was seen to go up into Heaven. He will come with a mighty blast of the archangel’s trumpet and in amazing pomp and splendor, attended by myriads of angels and vast hosts of the redeemed! But He will surely come! It may not be today. It may not be for many an age. But in such an hour as men think not, the Son of Man will come! When He does come, remember that if you are alive, you will have to stand before His judgment seat. But if you die before that time, your body shall rise again and your soul shall return to it—and there in your flesh shall you see the Son of God! That very Savior whom tonight I preach to you, who will save you if you believe

in Him, will then come to sit upon His Throne. And if you have lived and died without believing in Him, He will come to judge you and to pronounce upon you that dreadful sentence, "Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." Christ will come and you will all rise and either be accepted or condemned by Him! "These are the true sayings of God."

Further, there will be a Heaven for all those who are found believing in Jesus. Christ will take them there to be with Him where He is, that they may behold His Glory. They shall enter into most blessed fellowship with Him in all His joys and glories—and that, world without end. If you do not believe in Jesus, you will miss all that—and where He is you will never come! The door will be shut against you and the outer darkness where there shall be weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth will be your portion forever, for this is another true saving of God, that there is a Hell for all who do not believe in Jesus. As surely as there was a place of bliss for Lazarus, so surely was there a place of woe for Dives. As certainly as there is a heavenly fold for the sheep of Christ, so is there a Hell for the goats. "These are the true sayings of God." Do not despise them! Do not doubt them! Some of you who are unconverted may be within a few minutes of death. I was struck, the other Monday night, when I was coming to the Prayer Meeting here, by the appearance of a poor man, one of our Church Members, who was sitting by the fire in the room behind looking very sickly. It was bitterly cold, but I soon saw that death was making him still colder. I felt that in a short time he would die, however much care we might take of him.

We took him home in a cab and in a few hours he was gone. He was an old disciple so he had entered into his rest, but I thought, "It is strange that there should so often be deaths in this Tabernacle." Every now and then, while I am preaching

the Word here, there comes to me a message, "There is a person dying here." Besides that, death makes havoc continually among our thousands of members—sometimes three or four die in one week. And out of this vast congregation, I do not know how many will die this week. Probably we shall not all of us see next Sabbath, but certainly we shall soon depart out of this world. We shall fly away, and where, where, where shall we go? I do not want to seem to be fanatical, but I will solemnly put this question to everyone here—as you do not believe that you will die like a dog, and as you do believe that you will live in another state—are you prepared for it? And as most of you, at any rate, believe that faith in Jesus is the only preparation for the future state—have you believed in Him? Have you sought God by prayer? Is Jesus Christ your Lord and Savior?

If you are obliged to say, "No"—I cannot hold your hand, (there are too many for me to do that), nor can I take you by the buttonhole and detain you for a while, but I would gladly detain you as that ancient mariner detained the wedding guest, and say to you, "Are you wise to live in danger, every day, of death and judgment and yet to remain unprepared? Ought it not to be the first business of your life, by faith and prayer, to make your calling and election sure?" If you are wise men and wise women, surely a word will be enough for you. But if you are not wise, may God make you so! May He lead you, this very hour, to confess your sins and seek His mercy! And may every one of us be found in Christ in that great day! Then shall we rejoice forever in "the true sayings of God." The Lord grant it, for Jesus' sake!

Amen.

FIFTY-FIVE
THE RIDER ON THE WHITE HORSE
AND THE ARMIES WITH HIM

SERMON GIVEN ON JANUARY 1, 1870

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 20:11-16

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 25

“And I saw Leaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a

rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

REVELATION 19:11— 16.

THE beloved John was, above all other men, familiar with the humble Saviour. He had leaned his head upon his bosom, and better knew than any other of the apostles the painful beatings of his Lord's sorrowful heart. Never from his mind could be effaced the likeness of Christ, the visage more marred than that of any man. He had seen the dear sufferer on that dreadful night, when he was covered with gory sweat in Gethsemane; he had seen him after he had been buffeted and scourged in Herod's palace and Pilate's hall; he had even stood at the foot of the cross and seen his divine Master in the extreme agonies of death; and therefore the tender, affectionate heart of John would never permit his Master's suffering image to fade from his memory. Truly, if he had spoken to us in vision— in symbolic terms— concerning what he had seen of his Lord and Master here below, he would have described him as a footman going forth to the fight alone, with no armies following him, for all his disciples forsook him and fled; himself wearing no glittering armour, but with his garments dipped in blood and with his face smeared with shame. He would have told you how the solitary champion fought alone amid the dust and smother of the battle, and how he fell, and bit the dust, so that his foe set his foot upon him, and for a moment rejoiced over him. He would have told you how he leaped again from the grave, and trod down his adversaries, and led captivity captive. Such would have been. only in far nobler terms, John's description of

his first sight of his wrestling warrior Lord. But now in the passage before us a door was opened in heaven, and that disciple whom Jesus loved saw what else he had never seen—what else he had never imagined. He saw the same warrior Lord, but after quite another fashion. If John had continued to look with the eye of sense at Christ and his followers even to this day, and had viewed the battle as it is to be seen in history upon earth, he would have said that he saw the same despised and rejected One at the head of a band equally despised and rejected, leading them to prison and to death. He would have told you how to this very day the banner of the gospel is borne aloft amid smoke and dust, and Christ crucified is proclaimed amid contention and ridicule. He would have drawn in black colours the scene of the battle, the great battle which is raging among the sons of men at this very hour. But now a door was opened in heaven, and John saw the scene as God sees it. He looked upon it from heaven's point of view, and saw the conflict between good and evil, between Christ and Satan, between truth and error; saw it in heaven's own clear view, and he then wrote the vision that we also might see it. Oh, if we are sharers in this conflict, if we are following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, if we are pledged to the truth and to the right, if we are sworn to the precious blood of atonement, and to the grand doctrines of the gospel, it will do us good and stir our blood to stand on one of the serene hill-tops of heaven, above the mists of earth, and look upon the battle which rages still upon the earth, and will rage on till Armageddon shall conclude the war. If we can behold the scene, God strengthening our eyes, it may strengthen our hands for the conflict, our hearts for the fray.

When the door was opened in heaven, the first thing that the seer of Patmos noticed was our Captain: let us look at him, first. Afterwards he saw his followers; and then he marked the

mode of warfare, and caught a glimpse of the great defeat of the foe.

I. First, then, JOHN SAW OUR CAPTAIN, the King of kings.

Let us notice his glorious state. He says, "I saw, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him." Whilst Jesus was here, as we have already said, he was a foot-soldier; he had to plunge knee-deep through mire and dirt, and walk as wearily as any of the rest of the warrior company; but now that he has ascended, though he continues still to fight, it is in another fashion. Of course, the terms are symbolical, and none will take them literally; but our Lord is here described as sitting upon a gallant steed, charging his foes upon a snow-white horse. This means that Christ is honoured now. He is no weary, dusty, fainting footman now, I warrant you. Time was when Solomon said that he saw servants upon horses and princes walking in the dust: and so it was with Christ: Pilate and Herod rode the high horse, and Jesus must walk in pain and dishonour. But now, like a greater Mordecai, he rides on the King's horse, for this is the man whom the King delighteth to honour. In royal state our Jesus goeth forth to war, not as a common soldier, but as a glorious prince, royally mounted.

By a horse is denoted, not only honour, but power. To the Jews the employment of the horse in warfare was unusual, so that when it was used by their adversaries they imputed to it great force. Jesus Christ has a mighty power to-day, a power which none can measure. He was crucified in weakness, but where is the weakness now? He gave his hands to the nail, and his feet to be fastened to the wood, but he does so no longer. Now has he mounted on the horse of his exceeding great power, and he ruleth in heaven and in earth, and none can stay his hand, or put him to dishonour, or dispute his will. O you

that love him, feast your eyes upon him this day. It is not for me to speak; to do so were but to hold a candle to the sun; but gaze upon him for yourselves, and let your eyes be satiated with the image, as you see him, once despised and rejected, now taking to himself his great power.

Here is symbolised swiftness, too. Christ must walk when he was here, and go from city to city, scarcely getting through them all till his time was accomplished; but now his word runneth very swiftly. He has but to will it and the voice of his gospel is heard to the utmost ends of the earth; their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. Everywhere is the gospel preached, if it be but for a testimony against them, and to-day is fulfilled before your eyes the words of the prophet Zechariah, "The Lord of hosts hath visited his flock, the house of Judah, and hath made them as his goodly horse in the battle, and they shall fight because the Lord is with them."

The colour of the horse is meant to denote victory. The Roman conqueror, when he enjoyed a triumph, on returning from a campaign, rode up the Via Sacra on a white horse, and the Romans crowded to the house-tops to gaze upon the hero as he exhibited his spoils. Now Jesus Christ is admired of angels and elect spirits, who throng the windows of heaven to gaze upon him who is glorified by his Father. There is a pale horse, and his name that sits on him is Death, and there is a horse red with blood, and yet another black with judgment; but his is a white horse, significant of comfort and of joy to all that know and love him. He comes to fight, but the fight is for peace; he comes to smite, but it is to smite his people's enemies; he comes as a conqueror, but it is as a delivering conqueror who scattereth flowers and roses where he rides, breaking only the oppressor, but blessing the citizens whom he emancipates.

Again, I say, I scarcely like to speak upon this theme; it

seems too great for me, but I would bid the saints of God who have wept at Gethsemane now lift up their eyes and smile as they see that same Redeemer who once lay grovelling beneath the olive trees now riding on the white horse. Your Lord at this moment is no more despised, but all the glory that heaven itself can devise is lavished upon him.

John looked into the open vault of heaven, and he had time, not only to see the horse, but to mark the character of him that sat upon it. He says that he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True. By this you may know your Lord. He has been a faithful and true friend to you. O soldiers of the cross, when has he ever deceived you? When has he failed you, or forgotten you? Faithful? Ah, that he is, faithful to every word that he has spoken. And true? Do you not recognise him, for is he not the truth—the very truth of God? Has he not kept every promise that he has made you, and have you not found his teachings to be everlastingly settled upon divine veracity? And faithful and true has he been to the great Father. The work he undertook to do he has accomplished. He has in nothing drawn back from the covenant engagements under which he laid himself of old. He stood as the surety of his people, and he has been faithful and true to that smarting suretyship. He came to be the deliverer of his elect, and he has wrought the deliverance. He has not turned either to the right hand or to the left, but he has been faithful and true to every pledge which he gave to his Father for the deliverance of his chosen. Ay, and even his enemies, though they give him many a black word, cannot say that he is not faithful and true. He has not played false, even to the basest devil in hell, nor has he deceived, in any respect, the basest man that lives. Nor will he, for when the day comes to keep his word of terror, he will make the penalty tally to every syllable of the threatening, and mete out vengeance with a line and judgment with a plummet, and even his adversaries,

though they shall for ever rue the fact, shall confess that his name is Faithful and True. They called him many ill names when he was here, they said he had a devil and was mad; but now it is acknowledged that his name is Faithful and True. We acknowledge it with intense delight, and are glad to think that he leads the troops of heaven to the fight.

John still looked, and as he gazed with opened eye he marked the mode of action and of warfare which the champion employed, for he says, "In righteousness he doth judge and make war." Jesus is the only king who always wars in this fashion. There have been brilliant exceptions to the general rule, but war is usually as deceitful as it is bloody, and the words of diplomatists are a mass of lies. It seems impossible that men should deliberate about peace and war without straightway forgetting the meaning of words and the bonds of honesty. War still seems to be a piece of business in which truth would be out of place; it is a matter so accursed that falsehood is there most at home, and righteousness quits the plain. But as for our King, it is in righteousness that he doth judge and make war. Christ's kingdom needs no deception: the plainest speech and the clearest truth — these are the weapons of our warfare. The Jesuitical craft which speaks not what it means, the priestcraft which undermines the faith of men in God to teach them faith in their fellow men, the falsehood which does not teach a doctrine at the first but gradually insinuates it into feeble minds, the craft which creeps into houses and leads astray silly women, who are in bondage to their lusts— this has nothing to do with the kingdom of Christ. "In righteousness doth he judge and make war." He bids his champions come forth with nothing but his word, and speak that word faithfully, as they receive it, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear. He tells his people, wherever they are, to live righteously, soberly, and in all integrity, and he himself shakes off, as a man

shakes off a viper from his hand, anything that is unrighteous, everything that is contrary to truth and holiness. This is our champion, and I warrant you are right glad that he sits on the white horse, and has the upper hand. Since he fights after this fashion, the more of such warfare the better for mankind.

John, gazing still into the open door, saw a little— not much — of the person of his blessed Master. And, of course, he looked, first, into those eyes, those dear eyes which had so oft been filled with tears, and that at the last were even red with weeping. John gazed into them, or wished to do so, but he had to cover his own eyes, for they were dazzled. He says, “His eyes were as a flame of fire.” Think of your Master on the white horse with such eyes as these to-night. Why are they like flames of fire? Why, first, to discern the secrets of all hearts. There are no secrets here that Christ does not see. There is no lewd thought, there is no unbelieving scepticism, that Christ does not read. There is no hypocrisy, no formalism, no deceit, that he does not scan as easily as a man reads a page in a book. His eyes are like a flame of fire to read us through and through, and know us to our inmost soul. Oh, think of this, and if ye have ought of deceit tremble before him in whose spirit there is no guile. Those eyes like a flame of fire belong to our Champion that he may understand all the plots and crafts of all our foes. We are sometimes alarmed; we say that the machinations of Home are very deep, and that the plots of infidelity dive very low. But what mattereth it? His eyes are like a flame of fire: he knows what they are at. He will confound their politics, he will expose their knavish tricks, and still lead on his host conquering and to conquer. Let us never fear while he is on the white horse with such eyes as his.

It was natural that John should carry his glance from the eyes to the brow; and as he looked at our champion on the white horse he saw that on his head were many crowns. The

last he had seen there was a crown of thorns; but that was gone, and in the place of the one crown of the briars of the earth he saw many crowns of the jewels of heaven. There rests the crown of creation, for this Word made heaven and earth: the crown of providence, for this man now rules the nations with a rod of iron: the crown of grace, for it is from his royal hand that blessings are bestowed: the crown of the church, for be it known to all men that there is no head of the church but Christ, and woe unto those who steal the title. He is head over all things to his church, and king in the midst of her. Yes, on his head are many crowns, placed there by individual souls that he has saved. We have each one tried to crown him in our poor way, and we will do so as long as we live. All power is given unto him in heaven and in earth, and therefore well may multitudes of diadems fillet that august brow which once was belted with thorns. Glory be unto thee, O Son of God! Our hearts adore thee to-night as we contemplate thee on thy white horse.

Looking at him still, John saw one thing more, namely, his vesture. He says that his vesture was dipped in blood. Oh, but this is the grandest thought about our Master wherever he may be, that he is ever a red man wearing the bloody garment. As the atoning sacrifice he is at his best. We love him as we see the white lily of his perfect nature, but the rose of Sharon is the flower for us, for its sweet perfume breathes life to our fainting souls. Yes, he bled, and this is the greatest thing we can say of him. His life was glorious, but his death transcends it. A living Christ, a reigning Christ— we are charmed as we think of this; but oh, the bleeding Christ, the bleeding Christ for me! As the blood is the life, so is his blood life to us — the life of the gospel, the life of our hopes: and one delights to think of him that, though he rides the white horse, he has never stript off the bloody shirt in which he won our redemption. He looks like a Lamb that has been slain, and wears his priesthood still. When-

ever he goes out to conquer it is with this harness on, this vesture dipped in blood. Oh, preach him, ye his servants, preach him in his blood-red vesture. Ye shall never see souls saved if ye portray him in any other kind of coat. Ye take his own garment from him, and put on that of another, and ye pretend that ye are making him more illustrious as ye put on him a scarlet robe; but his own blood is his beauty and his triumph. Let him come before us in that, and our hearts shall crown him with loudest acclaim.

One other thing John saw, and that was his name. But here he seems to contradict himself. He says that he had a name which no man knoweth; yet he says that his name was the Word of God. Oh, but it is all true; for in such a one as our Master there must be paradoxes. No man knoweth his name. None of you know all his nature. His love passes your knowledge; his goodness, his majesty, his humiliation, his glory, all these transcend your ken. You cannot know him. Oh, the depths! If you plunge deepest into the mystery of the incarnate God you can never reach the bottom of it. "No man knoweth the Soil but the Father." And yet you do know his name, for you know that he is "the Word of God." And what means that? Why, when a man would show himself, he speaks. "Speak," said the philosopher, "that I may see you." A man's speech is the embodiment of his thought. You know his thought when you hear his word, if he be a truth-speaking man. Now, Christ is God's word. That is his heart, spoken out to you. His inmost thoughts of love are printed in great capital letters, and set before you in the living, loving, bleeding, dying person of the incarnate Son of God. Thus is he called the Word of God, and in that capacity it becomes us to delight ourselves exceedingly in him, and to exult because he is now riding triumphantly upon his white horse.

II. Thus have I bidden you gaze at what John saw. Time chides me, however, and I can only ask you next, if you have seen the brightest One of all upon the white horse, just to look at HIS FOLLOWERS. "The armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses."

See, then, that Christ has a great following— not one army, but "armies," whole hosts of them— numbers that cannot be counted. My Lord is not the chief of a small band, but he has a great host. There be some who think that all Christ's followers go to their little Bethel, and so they all sit down on the top of their own Mount Zion, and sweetly bless the Lord who shuts out the rest of mankind. But I tell you your little Bethel would not make a stable for the horses of his lieutenants. He has great armies following him, for a countless number out of every people and nation and tongue has he redeemed with his most precious blood.

And these that follow him, you notice, are all mounted. They followed him on white horses. They are mounted on the same sort of horses as himself, for they fare as he fares: when he walks, they must walk; when he bears a cross, they must carry crosses, too; but if ever he gets a crown, he cries, "They shall be crowned, too." If ever he gets on horseback, he will have his saints on horseback with him, for it is not like him that he should ride and they should walk. Remember Alexander, and how he kept up the spirit of his soldiers. Whenever the troops were thirsty, Alexander would not drink; and when they marched on foot, Alexander footed it with them. So is it with our Master— he has been marching here in the rough ways with us, and he will let us ride in the glory-ways with him when the time shall come.

The armies of Christ followed him on white horses. Look ye a little steadily at these white horses, for I want you to

observe the armour-of their riders. Cromwell's men wore at their side long iron scabbards, in which they carried swords, which oftentimes they wiped across the manes of their horses, when they were red with blood. A dreadful story that to read, brave as were those Ironsides. But if you look at these troops there is not a sword amongst them. Not a scabbard dangles; not a piece of metal flashes back the sunlight. Neither helmet nor cuirass is there, nor does there seem to be a pistol at the holster. They are not armed with lance or pike, and yet they are riding forth to war. Do you want to know the armour of that war? I will tell you. They are clothed in white linen, white and clean. Strange battle array this! And yet this is how they conquer, and how you must conquer, too. This is both armour and weapon. Holiness is our sword and our shield. This is pike and gun. If we but live as Christ lives and follow him, we shall conquer, for no sword can come at him that lives to God,— since, should it slay his body, it cannot touch his soul: he lives and conquers still. Think of this, and never ask for any other harness but this in the day of battle.

Yet I have said they were all on horses, which shows you that the saints of God have a strength that they sometimes forget. You know not that you ride on a horse, O child of God; but there is a supreme invisible power which helps you in contending for Christ and for his truth, You are mightier than you know of, and you are riding more swiftly to the battle and more rapidly over the heads of your foes than ever you dream. When a door shall be opened in heaven to you, and you get to the battle's end, you will say, "Bless the Lord, I, too, rode on a white horse. I, too, conquered when I thought I was defeated. I, too, by simple obedience to his will, and keeping the faith, and walking in his truth, have been more than conqueror through him that loved me."

And is not this a grand sight, this man— this bonny man, as

Rutherford calls him— on his white horse, and all these bright ones following after him in all their glorious array.

III. And now we must close, for the bell has tolled just now to show that the hour is up, but we cannot end till we have spoken of THE WARFARE.

What is this warfare? There cannot be war without a sword, yet if you look all along the ranks of the white-robed armies there is not a sword amongst them all. Who carries the sword? There is one who bears it for them all. It is he, the King, who comes to marshal us. He bears a sword. But where? It is in his mouth! Strange place! A sword in his mouth. Yet this is the only sword my Lord and Master wields. Mahomet subdued men with the scimeter, but Christ subdues men with the gospel. We have but to tell out the glad tidings of the love of God, for this is the sword of Christ with which he smites the nations. Be his mouths, my brethren; be his mouths, my sisters. Tell to your children in your Sunday-school classes, tell to the poor in the corners of the streets, tell by your little printed pamphlets if you cannot by your voices, all the story of how he loved us and gave himself for us, for this is the sword of our warfare, it goeth forth from the mouth of Christ. Let us be content to fight with this and nothing else.

But for those who will not yield to it our Leader has a hand as well as a tongue, and he says that he will rule the nations with a rod of iron; and if you will read history through you will find that all nations that reject the gospel have to suffer for it. I select one instance. The gospel came to Spain years ago, and multitudes of the nobility were converted; but they had their auto-da-fés, and burnt the saints, and the accursed Inquisition stamped out the gospel in Spain; and to this day the nation cannot rise. It will, I trust, by God's forgiving mercy; but for

centuries she that ruled the nations and covered the deep with her armadas has been sitting grovelling in her poverty and sloth, for Christ has ruled her with a rod of iron, and so will he rule all nations that reject the testimony of his mouth. If the sword of his mouth be not heeded, then cometh the last of this dread warfare — and may God grant that we may never know it — when his foot shall do it, for he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. Ah, what a crush must that be which will come upon the clusters of Gomorrah from the foot which once was nailed to the tree. Who stamped that sinner's soul and crushed it down? Was he an angry angel with a sword of fire? It was the Christ of God, the man of love; rejected and despised. Fiercer than a lion on his prey is love when once provoked. When love turns to jealousy its fires are like coals of juniper, which have a violent flame. Beware, ye despisers, lest ye continue to despise. Submit to the sword of his mouth, lest ye be smitten by his hand. Be wise when once his hand begins to smite you lest you have to feel his foot, for it is all over then.

May you and I have a white horse each with which to follow Christ. But we never shall, unless we are his followers here. We must put on the snow-white garments now. Here they are ready for you. The righteousness of Christ will be given to any man who accepts him and believes on him; and when your snow-white garments once are on, he will give you the horse of his sacred strength, and you, even you, following in the track of your gallant leader, shall ride on shouting "Victory, victory, victory, through the blood of the Lamb." The Lord bless you, for Jesus's sake.

Amen.

FIFTY-SIX
THE SAVIOUR'S MANY CROWNS

SERMON GIVEN ON OCTOBER 30, 1859

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 19:12

FROM: NEW PARK STREET PULPIT VOLUME 5

"On his head were many crowns."

REVELATION 19:12

Ah, well ye know what head this was, and ye have not forgotten its marvellous history. A head which once in infancy reclined upon the bosom of a woman! A head which was meekly bowed in obedience to a carpenter! A head which became in after years a fountain of water, and a reservoir of tears. A head which "sweat as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground!" A head which was spit upon, whose hair was plucked: A head which at the last in the grim agony of death, crowned with thorns, gave utterance to the terrible death-shriek—*lama sabachthani!* A head which afterwards slept in the grave; and—glory be unto him that liveth and was dead, but is alive for ever—

more—a head which afterwards rose again from the tomb, and looked with radiant eyes of love upon the holy women waiting at the sepulcher. This is the head whereof John speaks in the words of the text. Who would have thought that a head, the visage of which was more marred than that of any other man—a head which suffered more from the tempests of heavenward of earth than ever mortal brow before, should now be surrounded with these many diadems, these star-bestudded crowns!

My brethren, it needs John himself to expound this glorious vision to you. Alas my eye has not yet seen the heavenly glory, nor has my ear heard the celestial song, I am therefore but as a little child among topless mountains, overawed with grandeur, and speechless with awe. Pray for me that I may utter a few words which the Holy Spirit may comfortably apply to your souls, for if he help me not, I am helpless indeed. With his divine aid, I dare to look upon the glorious diadems of our Lord and King. The crowns upon the head of Christ are of three sorts. First, there are the *crowns of dominions*, many of which are on his head. Next, there are the *crowns of victory*, which he has won in many a terrible battle. Then there are the *crowns of thanksgiving* with which his church and all his people have delighted to crown his wondrous head.

I. First, then, let every believing eye look through the thick darkness and behold Jesus as he sits this day upon the throne of his Father, and let every heart rejoice while it sees the many CROWNS OF DOMINION upon his head. First, and foremost, there sparkles about his brow the everlasting diadem of the King of *Heaven*. His are the angels. The cherubim and seraphim continually bound forth his praise. At his behest the mightiest spirit delights to fly, and carry his commands to the most distant world". He has but to speak, and it is done. Cheerfully is he obeyed, and majestically doth he reign. His high courts are thronged with holy spirits, who live upon his smile,

who drink light from his eyes, who borrow glory from his majesty. There is no spirit in heaven so pure that it does not bow before him, no angel so bright that it does not veil its face with its wings, when it draweth near to him. Yea, moreover, the many spirits redeemed, delight to bow before him, day without night they circle his throne, singing—"Worthy is he that was slain and hath redeemed us from our sins by his blood, honor, and glory, and majesty, and power, and dominion, and might, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." To be King of heaven were surely enough! The ancients were accustomed to divide heaven, and earth, and hell, into divers monarchies, and allot each of them to distinct kings; and surely heaven were an empire large enough even for an infinite Spirit. Christ is Lord of all its boundless plains. He laid the precious stones upon which was builded that city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God; he is the light of that city, he is the joy of its inhabitants, and it is their loving life evermore to pay him honor. Side by side with this bright crown behold another. It is the *iron* crown of hell, for Christ reigneth there supreme. Not only in the dazzling brightness of heaven, but in the black impenetrable darkness of hell is his omnipotence felt, and his sovereignty acknowledged; the chains which bind damned spirits are the chains of his strength; the fires which burn are the fires of his vengeance; the burning rays that scorch through their eyeballs, and melt their very heart, are flashed from his vindictive eye. There is no power in hell besides his. The very devils know his might. He chaineth the great dragon. If he give him a temporary liberty, yet is the chain in his hand, and he can draw him back lest he go beyond his limit. Hell trembles at him. The very howlings of lost spirits are but deep bass notes of his praise. While in heaven the glorious notes shout forth his goodness; in hell the deep growlings resound his justice, and his certain victory over all his foes.

Thus his empire is higher than the highest heaven, and deeper than the lowest hell. This earth also is a province of his wide domains. Though small the empire compared with others, yet from this world hath he perhaps derived more glory than from any other part of his dominions. He reigns on earth. On his head is the crown of *creation*. "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." His voice said, "Let there be light," and there was light. It was his strength that piled the mountains, and his wisdom balances the clouds. He is Creator. If you lift your eye to the upper spheres, and behold yon starry worlds—he made them. They are not self-created. He struck them off like sparks from the anvil of his omnipotence; and there they glitter, upheld and supported by his might. He made the earth and all men that be upon it, the cattle on a thousand hills, and the birds that make glad the air. The sea is his, and he made it also. Leviathan he hath formed, and though that monster maketh the deep to be hoary, yet is he but a creature of his power. Together with this crown of creation there is yet another—the crown of *providence*, for he sustaineth all things by the word of his power. Everything must cease to be, if it were not for the continual out-going of his strength. The earth must die, the sun must grow dim with age, and nature sink in years, if Christ supplied it not with perpetual strength. He sends the howling blasts of winter; he, anon, restrains them and breathes the breath of spring; he ripens the fruits of summer, and he makes glad the autumn with his harvest. All things know his will. The heart of the great universe beats by his power; the very sea derives its tide from him. Let him once withdraw his hands, and the pillars of earth must tremble; the stars must fall like fig leaves from the tree, and all things must be quenched in the blackness of annihilation. On his head is the crown of providence. And next to this there glitters also the thrice-glorious crown of grace. He is the

King of *grace*: he gives, or he withholds. The river of God's mercy flows from underneath his throne; he sits as Sovereign in the dispensation of mercy. He hath the key of heaven; he openeth, and no man shutteth; he shutteth, and no man openeth; he calleth, and the stubborn heart obeys; he willeth, and the rebellious spirit bends its knee; for he is Master of men, and when he wills to bless, none can refuse the benediction. He reigneth in his church amidst willing spirits; and he reigns for his church over all the nations of the world, that he may gather unto himself a people that no man can number who shall bow before the scepter of his love.

I pause here, overcome by the majesty of the subject, and instead of attempting to describe that brow, and those glittering crowns, I shall act the part of a seraph, and bow before that well-crowned head, and cry, "Holy, holy, holy, art thou Lord God of hosts! The keys of heaven, and death, and hell, hang at thy girdle; thou art supreme, and unto thee be glory for ever and ever."

And now, my brothers, what say you to this? Do not sundry thoughts at once stir in your hearts? Methinks I hear one say, "If this be so, if Christ hath these many crowns of dominion, how vain it is for me to rebel against him." My hearers, it may be, some of you are striving against Christ. Like Saul of Tarsus, you have become "exceeding mad" against him. Your wife frequents the house of God, and you forbid her. You persecute your child because she follows Jesus. You hate the very name of Christ; you curse his servants; you despise his Word. You would if you could, spit upon his ministers; and, perhaps, burn his people. This know, that you have undertaken a battle in which you are certain of defeat. Who ever above against him and prospered? Go O man and do battle against the lightning, and hold the thunder-bolt in thine hand; go and restrain the sea, and hush the billows, and hold the winds in the hollow of thine hand;

and when thou hast done this, then lift thy puny hand against the King of kings. For he that was crucified is thy Master, and though thou oppose him thou shalt not succeed. In thy utmost malice thou shalt be defeated, and the vehemence of thy wrath shall but return upon thine own head. Methinks I see this day the multitudes of Christ's enemies. They stand up; they take counsel together—"Let us break his bands in sunder; let us cast away his cords from us." Hear ye, O rebels, yonder deep-sounding laugh? Out of the thick darkness of his tabernacle, Jehovah laughs at you. He hath you in derision. He saith "I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." Come on, ye enemies of Christ, and be dashed in pieces. Come on in your most vehement force, and fall like the waves that are broken against the immovable rock. He ruleth and he will rule; and you one day shall be made to feel his power. For "At the name of Jesus every knee must bow, of things in heaven and things on earth, and things under the earth."

Another thought, right full of comfort springs up to my mind. Believer, look to Christ's thrice-crowned head this day and be comforted. Is providence against thee? Correct thy speech; thou hast erred, God hath not become thine enemy. Providence is not against thee, for Jesus is its King; he weighs its trials and counts its storms. Thy enemies may strive, but they shall not prevail against thee—he shall smite them upon the cheek-bone. Art thou passing through the fire? The fire is Christ's dominion. Art thou going through the floods? They shall not drown thee; for even the floods obey the voice of the Omnipotent Messiah. Wherever thou art called, thou canst not go where Jesus's love reigns not. Commit thyself into his hands. However dark thy circumstance, he can make thy pathway clear. Though night surround thee, he shall surely bring the day. Only trust thou in him; leave thy concerns both little and great in his Almighty hands, and thou shalt yet see how kind his

heart, how strong his hand to bring thee out and glorify thee. Repose your confidence in him who is the King of kings. Come bring your burdens each one of you to his feet, and take a song away. If your hearts be heavy bring them here; the golden scepter can lighten them. If your griefs be many, tell them into his ear; his loving eyes can scatter them, and through the thick darkness shall there be a bright light shining, and you shall see his face and know that all is well.

I am sure there is no more delightful doctrine to a Christian, than that of Christ's absolute sovereignty. I am glad there is no such thing as chance, that nothing is left to itself, but that Christ everywhere hath sway. If I thought that there was a devil in hell that Christ did not govern, I should be afraid that devil would destroy me, If I thought there was a circumstance on earth, which Christ did not over-rule, I should fear that that circumstance would ruin me. Nay, if there were an angel in heaven that was not one of Jehovah's subjects, I should tremble even at him. But since Christ is King of kings, and I am his poor brother, one whom he loves, I give all my cares to him, for he careth for me; and leaning on his breast, my soul hath full repose, confidence, and security.

II. And now, in the second place, Christ hath many CROWN'S OF VICTORY. The first diadems which I have mentioned are his by right. He is God's only begotten and well-beloved Son, and hence he inherits unlimited dominions. But viewed as the Son of Man, conquest has made him great, and his own right hand and his holy arm have won for him the triumph. In the first place, Christ has a crown which I pray that every one of you may wear. He has a crown of victory over the world. For thus saith he himself, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." Did you ever think of what a stern battle that was which Christ had to fight with the world? The world first said, "I will extinguish him, he shall not be known;" and it threw

on Christ heaps of poverty that there he might be smothered. But he shone in his poverty, and the seamless coat shone with greater light than the robe of the rabbi. Then the world attacked him with its threatenings. Sometimes they dragged him to the brow of a hill to cast him down headlong; at another time they took up stones to stone him. But he who was not to be bidden by poverty, was not to be quenched by threatening. And then the world tried its blandishments; it came with a fair face and presented to him a crown. They would have taken Christ and would have made him a king; but he who cared not for their frowns was regardless of their smiles. He put away the crown from him; he came not to be a king but to suffer and to die. "My kingdom is not of this world," said he, "else would my servants fight." Have you never thought how through thirty years the world tempted Christ? That temptation of the devil in the wilderness was not the only one which he had to endure. Trials of every shape and size surrounded him, the world emptied its quiver, and shot all its arrows against the breast of the spotless Redeemer; but all holy, all unharmed was he. Still separate from sinners, he walked among them without defilement; feasted among them, and yet did not sanction their gluttony; drank with them, and yet was not a drunkard, acted as they acted in all innocent things, and was the world's man, and yet not a man of the world. He was in the world, but he was not of it; separate, and yet one of themselves; united to our race by closest ties, and yet evermore separate and distinguished from all mankind. I would, my brethren, that we could imitate Christ in our battle with the world. But alas, the world oftentimes gets the upper hand of us. Sometimes we yield to its smiles, and often do we tremble before its frowns. Have hope and courage, believer; be like your Master, be the world's foe and overcome it, yield not, suffer it never to entrap your watchful feet. Stand upright amid all its pressure, and be not moved by all its

enchantments. Christ did this, and therefore around his head is that right royal crown of victory; trophy of triumph over the entire forces of the world.

Furthermore, the next crown he wears is the crown by which he has overcome sin. Sin has been more than a match for creatures of every kind. Sin fought the angels and a third part of the stars of heaven fell. Sin defied the perfect Adam and soon overcame him, for even at the first blow he fell. Sin had a stern contest with Jesus our Lord, but in him it found its master. Sin came with all its temptations, but Christ resisted and overcame. It came with its horror and with its curse; Christ suffered, Christ endured, and so destroyed its power. He took the poisoned darts of the curse into his own heart, and there quenched its poison fires by shedding his own blood. By suffering, Christ has become master over sin. The dragon's neck is now beneath his feet. There is not a temptation which he has not known and therefore not a sin which he has not overcome. He has cast down every shape and form of evil, and now for ever stands he more than a conqueror through his glorious sufferings. Oh, my brethren, how bright that crown which he deserves, who hath for ever put away our sin by the sacrifice of himself. My soul enraptured restrains my voice, and once again I bow before his throne and worship, in spirit, My bleeding Ransomer, my suffering Saviour.

And then again, Christ wears about his head the crown of death. He died, and in that dreadful hour he overcame death, rifled the sepulcher, split the stone which guarded the mouth of the grave, hewed death in pieces and destroyed the arch-destroyer. Christ seized the iron limbs of Death and ground them to powder in his hand. Death swayed his scepter over all the bodies of men, but Christ has opened the gate of resurrection for his redeemed, and in that day when he shall put the trumpet to his lips and blow the resurrection blast, then shall it

be seen how Christ is universal monarch over all the domains of death, for as the Lord our Saviour rose, so all his followers must. And then again, Christ is not only Lord of the world, king of sin, and king of death, but he is king of Satan too. He met that arch fiend foot to foot. Fearful was the struggle, for our champion sweat as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground; but he hewed his way to victory through his own body, through the agonies of his own soul. Desperate was the encounter. Head and hands, and feet and heart were wounded, but the Saviour flinched not from the fight. He rent the lion of the pit as though he were a kid, and broke the dragon's head in pieces. Satan was nibbling at Christ's heel, Christ trod on him and smashed his head. Now hath Jesus led captivity captive, and is master over all the hosts of hell. Glorious is that victory! Angels repeat the triumphant strain, his redeemed take up the song; and you, ye blood-bought sons of Adam, praise him too, for he hath overcome all the evil of hell itself.

And yet, once again, another crown hath Christ, and that is the crown of victory over man. Would to God, my hearers, that he wore a crown for each of you. What hard work it is to fight with the evil heart of man. If you wish him to do evil, you can soon overcome him; but if you would overcome him with good, how hard the struggle! Christ could have man's heart, but man would not give it to him. Christ tried him in many a way; he wooed him, but man's heart was hard and would not melt. Moses came, and said, "My Master, let me try and open man's heart;" and he used the fire, and the whirlwind, and the hammer of God; but the heart would not break, and the spirit would not open to Christ. Then Christ came, and he said, "Hard-heart, I will win thee; O, icy Soul, I will melt thee." And the Soul said. "No, Jesus, I defy thee." But Christ said, "I will do it." And he came once upon a time to the poor Hard-heart, and brought his cross with him. "See, Hard-heart," said he, "I love thee; though

thou lovest not me, yet I love thee, and in proof of this, see here; I will hang upon this cross." And as Hard-heart looked on, suddenly fierce men nailed the Saviour to the tree. His hands were pierced; his soul was rent in agony, and looking down on the Hard-heart, Jesus said, "Hard-heart, wilt thou not love *me*? I love *thee*; I have redeemed thee from death; though thou me, yet do I die for thee; though thou kickest against me yet will I surely carry thee to my throne." And the Hard-heart said, "Jesus, I can bear it no longer, I yield to thee. thy love has overcome me; oh, I would be thy subject for ever, only remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom, and let me be numbered with thy subjects both now and for ever." My hearers, has Christ ever overcome you? Say, has his love bean too much for you? Have you been compelled to give up your sins, woeed by his love divine? Have your eyes been made to run with tears at the thought of his affection for you, and of your own ingratitude? Have you ever thought this over?—"I, the blackest of sinners, have despised him; his Bible I have left unread; his blood I have trampled under foot, and yet he died for me, and loved me with an everlasting love." Surely, this has made you bow your knee; this has made your spirit cry—

*"Oh, sovereign grace my heart subdue;
I will be led in triumph, too,
A willing captive to my Lord
To sing the triumphs of his Word."*

If this be the case with you, then you may yourself recognize one of the many crowns that are on his head.

III. Now, this brings me to the third point, and may I very earnestly ask your prayers, that, feeble as I am this morning, I may be helped while I endeavor to dwell upon this sweet subject.

I am preaching in my own spirit against wind and tide. There are times when one preaches with pleasure and delight, enjoying the Word, but now I can get nothing for myself, even if I am giving you anything. Pray for me, that nevertheless the Word may be blessed, that in my weakness God's strength may appear.

The third head deals with the CROWNS OF THANKS-GIVING. Surely, concerning these we may well say, "On his head are many crowns." In the first place, all the mighty doers in Christ's church ascribe their crown to him. What a glorious crown is that which Elijah will wear—the man who went to Ahab, and when Ahab said, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" reproved him to his very face—the man who took the prophets of Baal, and let not one of them escape, but hewed them in pieces and made them a sacrifice to God. What a crown will *he* wear who ascended into heaven in a chariot of fire! What a crown, again, belongs to Daniel, saved from the lion's den—Daniel, the earnest prophet of God. What a crown will be that which shall glitter on the head of the weeping Jeremy, and the eloquent Esaias! What crowns are those which shall begirt the heads of the apostles! What a weighty diadem is that which Paul shall receive for his many years of service! And then, my friends, how shall the crown of Luther glitter, and the crown of Calvin; and what a noble diadem shall that be which Whitfield shall wear, and all those men who have so valiantly served God, and who by his might have put to flight the armies of the Aliens, and have maintained the gospel banner erect in troublous times! Nay, but let me point to you a scene. Elijah enters heaven, and where goes he with that crown which is instantly put upon his head? See, he flies to the throne, and stooping there, he uncrowns himself; "Not unto me, not unto me but unto thy name be all the glory!" See the prophets as they steam in one by one; without exception, they put their

crowns upon the head of Christ. And mark the apostles, and all the mighty teachers of the church; they all bow there and cast their crowns at his feet, who, by his grace, enabled them to win them.

*"I ask them whence their victory came;
They, with united breath,
Ascribe their triumph to the Lamb,
Their conquest to HIS DEATH."*

Not only the mighty doers but the mighty sufferers do this. How brilliant are the ruby crowns of the martyred saints. From the stake, from the gibbet, from the fire, they ascended up to God; and among the bright ones they are doubly bright, fairest of the mighty host that surrounds the throne of the Blessed One. What crowns they wear! I must confess that I have often envied them. It is a happy thing to live in peaceful days; but while happy, it is not honorable. How much more honorable to have died the death of Lawrence, grilled to death upon that fiery gridiron, or to die pierced with spears, with every bone dislocated on the rack! A noble way of serving Christ, to have stood calmly in the midst of the fires, and have clapped one's hands, and cried. "I can do all things, even give my body to be burned for his dear names sake!" What crowns are those which martyr's wear! An angel might blush to think that his dignity was so small compared with that of those riders in chariots of fire. Where are all those crowns? They are on the head of Christ. Not a martyr wears his crown; they all take their blood-red crowns, and then they place them on his brow—the fire crown, the rack crown, there I see them all glitter. For it was his love that helped them to endure; it was by his blood that they overcame.

And then, brethren, think of another list of crowns. They

who turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever. There are a few men whom God has enabled to do much for the church and much for the world. They spend and are spent. Their bodies know no rest, their souls no ease. Like chariots instinct with life, or dragged by unseen but resistless coursers, they fly from duty to duty, from labor to labor. What crowns shall theirs be when they come before God, when the souls they have saved shall enter paradise with them, and when they shall say, "Here am I and the children which thou hast given me! "What shouts of acclamation, what honors, what rewards shall then be given to the winners of souls! What will they do with their crowns? Why, they will take them from their heads and lay them there where sits the Lamb in the midst of the throne. There will they bow and cry, "Jesus, we were not saviours, thou didst it all; we were but thy servants. The victory belongs not to us but to our Master. We did reap, but thou didst sow, we did cast in the net, but thou didst fill it full. All our success is accomplished through thy strength, and by the power of thy grace." Well may it be said of Christ, "On his head are many crowns."

But see, another host approaches. I see a company of cherubic spirits flying upwards to Christ; and who are these? I know them not. They are not numbered among the martyrs; I read not their names among the apostles; I do not even distinguish them as having been written amongst the saints of the living God. Who are these? I ask one of them, "Who are you, ye bright and sparkling spirits?" The leader replies, "We are the glorious myriad of *infants*, who compose the family above. We from our mother's breasts fled straight to heaven, redeemed by the blood of Christ. We were washed from original depravity, and we have entered heaven. From every nation of the earth have we come; from the days of the first infant even to the winding up of earth's history, we in flocks have sped hither like

doves to their windows." "How came ye here, ye little ones?" They reply, "through the blood of Christ, and we come to crown him Lord of all." I see the countless multitude surround the Saviour, and flying to him, each one puts its crown upon his head, and then begins to sing again louder than before. But yonder I see another company following them. "And who are ye?" The reply is, "Our history on earth is the very opposite of the story of those bright spirits that have gone before. We lived on earth for sixty, or seventy, or eighty years, until we tottered into our graves from very weakness; when we died there was no marrow in our bones, our hair had grown grey, and we were crisp and dry with age." "How came ye here?" They reply—"After many years of strife with the world, of trials and of troubles, we entered heaven at last." "And ye have crowns I see." "Yes," they say, "but we intend not to wear them." "Whither are ye going then?" "We are going to yonder throne for our crowns have been surely given us by grace, for nothing but grace could have helped us to weather the storm so many, many years." I see the grave and reverend sires pass one by one before the throne, and there they lay their crowns at his blessed feet, and then shouting with the infant throng, they cry, "Salvation unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

And then I see following behind them another class. *And who are ye?* Their answer is "We are the chief of sinners, saved by grace." And here they come—Saul of Tarsus, and Manasseh, and Rahab, and many of the same class. And how came ye here? They reply, "We have had much forgiven, we were grievous sinners, but the love of Christ reclaimed us, the blood of Christ washed us, and whiter than snow are we, though once we were black as hell." And whither are ye going? They reply, "We are going to cast our crowns at his feet, and 'Crown him Lord of all.'" Among that throng, my dear hearers, I hope it may be my lot to stand. Washed from many sins, redeemed by

precious blood, happy thou that moment be, when I shall take my crown from off my head, and put it on the head of him whom having not seen I love, but in whom believing, I rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. And it is a happy thought for me, this morning, that many of you will go with me there. Come brother and sisters; in a few more years, many of us who have met Sunday after Sunday in this Music Hall, will walk up in one hand; and without exception, ye saints of God, I am persuaded we shall be prepared there to lay all our honors down, and to ascribe unto him the glory for ever and ever. "Ah, but" says Little-Faith, "I fear I shall never get into heaven, and therefore I shall never crown him." Yes, but Little-Faith, do you know that one of the richest crowns Christ ever wears, and one of the brightest which adorns his brow, is the crown which Little-Faith puts on his head? For Little-Faith when it gets to heaven will say, "O what grace has been shown to me, that though the meanest of the family, I have still been kept—though least of all the saints, yet hell has not prevailed against me—though weaker than the weakest, yet as my days so has my strength been." Will not your gratitude be great? Will not your song be loud, when approaching his dear feet, you lay your honors there and cry, "Blessed be Jesus who has kept my poor soul in all its dangers, and brought me safely at last to himself?" *"On his head were many crowns."*

I cannot preach any longer, but I must ask you this question, my dear hearers: Have you a crown to put on the head of Jesus Christ to-day? "Yes," says one, "I have. I must crown him for having delivered me out of my last great trouble." "I must crown him," says another, "for he has kept up my spirits when I was well nigh despairing." "I must crown him," says another, "for he has crowned me with lovingkindness and tender mercy." Methinks I see one standing yonder who says, "Would that I could crown him. If he would but save me, I would crown him."

Ah, if he would but give himself to me, I would gladly give myself to him. I am too worthless and too vile." Nay, my brother, but does your heart say, "Lord have mercy upon me?" Does your soul now crave pardon and forgiveness through the blood of Christ? Then go boldly near him this day and say to him, "Jesus, I the chief of sinners am, but I rely upon thee;" and in so saying thou put a crown upon his head which shall make glad his heart, even as in the day when his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals. Make this the day of your espousals to him. Take him to be thy all in all, and then mayest thou look at this text with pleasure and say, "Yes, on his head are many crowns, and I have put one there, and I shall put another there ere long."

God add his blessing, for Jesus sake!

Amen.

REVELATION 20

FIFTY-SEVEN
THE FIRST RESSURECTION

SERMON GIVEN ON MAY 5, 1861

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 20:4-6, 12

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 7

*“And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them,
and judgement was given unto them: and I
saw the souls of them that were beheaded for
the witness of Jesus, and for the word of
God, and which had not worshipped the
beast, neither his image, neither had
received his mark upon their foreheads, or in
their hands; and they lived and reigned with
Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the
dead lived not again until the thousand
years were finished. This is the first resurrec-
tion. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in
the first resurrection; on such the second
death hath no power, but they shall be*

*priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign
with him a thousand years."*

REVELATION 20:4-6.

*"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand
before God; and the books were opened: and
another book was opened, which is the book
of life: and the dead were judged out of those
things which were written in the books,
according to their works."*

REVELATION 20:12.

You will bear me witness, my friends, that it is exceedingly seldom I ever intrude into the mysteries of the future with regard either to the second advent, the millennial reign, or the first and second resurrection. As often as we come across it in our expositions, we do not turn aside from the point, but if guilty at all on this point, it is rather in being too silent than saying too much. And now, in bringing forward this question this morning, I would say, I do not do it to amuse your curiosity by novelty, or that I may pretend to have the true key of the prophecies which are as yet unfulfilled. I scarcely think it would be justifiable for me to spend my time upon prophetic studies for which I have not the necessary talent, nor is it the vocation to which my Master has ordained me. I think some ministers would do far more for the profit of Gods people, if they would preach more about the first advent and less about the second. But I have chosen this topic because I believe it has practical bearings, and may be made useful, instructive, and rousing to us all. I find that the most earnest of the Puritanic preachers did not forbear to

dwell upon this mysterious subject. I turn to Charnock; and in his disquisition upon the Immutability of God, he does not hesitate to speak of the conflagration of the world, of the millennial reign, and the new heavens and new earth. I turn to Richard Baxter, a man who above all other men loved the souls of men; who more perhaps than any man, with the exception of the apostle Paul, travailed in birth for souls; and I find him making a barbed arrow out of the doctrine of the coming of the Lord, and thrusting this great truth into the very heart and conscience of unbelievers, as though it were heaven's own sword. And John Bunyan too — plain, honest John— he who preached so simply that a child could comprehend him, and was certainly never guilty of having written upon his forehead the word "Mystery," he, too, speaks of the advent of Christ, and of the glories which shall follow; and uses this doctrine as a stimulus to the saints, and as a warning to the ungodly. I do not think therefore I need tremble very much if the charge should be brought against me of bringing before you an unprofitable subject. It shall profit if God shall bless the word; and if it be God's word we may expect his blessing if we preach it all, but he will withdraw it if we refrain from teaching any part of his council because in our pretended wisdom we fancy that it would not have practical effect.

Now, my dear friends, in introducing again these texts to you, I shall just remark that in the first text which relates to the people of God, we have three great privileges; and in the second text, which relates to the ungodly who are not in covenant with Christ, we have three great and terrible things which may soon be perceived.

I. First of all, we will take the first text with its THREE PRIVILEGES. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but

they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."

Before I proceed to enter into these privileges, I must remark that two modes of understanding this verse have been proposed, both of which I think are untenable. I have been, reading carefully through Albert Barnes. He gives it, as his opinion, that the first resurrection here spoken of is a resurrection of principles, — a resurrection of the patience, the undaunted courage, the holy boldness and constancy of the ancient martyrs. He says these great principles have been forgotten, and, as it were, buried; and that during the spiritual reign of Christ which is to come, these great principles will have a resurrection. Now, I appeal to you, would you, in reading that passage, think this to be the meaning? Would any man believe that to be its meaning, if he had not some thesis to defend? The fact is, we sometimes read Scripture, thinking of what it ought to say, rather than what it does say. I do not hesitate to affirm that any simple-minded person, who was intent upon discovering the mind of the Spirit, and not upon finding a method by which the words could be compelled to express his own mind, would say that the resurrection of principles, or the resurrection of doctrines, does not give the fair meaning of the words here stated. Brethren, cannot you perceive at a glance that this is the resurrection of men? And is it not a literal resurrection, too? Does it not say, "I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus?" Is it not written, "The rest of the dead lived not?" Does this mean the rest of the dead principles? the rest of the dead doctrines? You cannot so translate it. It is — we have no doubt whatever — a literal resurrection of the saints of God, and not of principles nor of doctrines. But another interpretation has been proposed. I once had the misfortune to listen to an excellent friend of mine who was preaching upon this very text, and I must confess, I did not

attend with very great patience to his exposition. He said it meant, blessed and holy is he who has been born again, who has been regenerated, and so has had a resurrection from dead works by the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. All the while he was preaching, I could not help wishing that I could propose to him the difficulty, how he would make this metaphorical interpretation agree with the literal fact, that the rest of the dead lived not till the thousand years were finished? For, if the first resurrection here spoken of is a metaphorical, or spiritual, or typical resurrection, why the next where it speaks of the resurrection of the dead must be spiritual and mystical, and metaphorical too. Now, no one would agree to this. You know, when you read a chapter, you are not to say, "This part is a symbol, and is to be read so, and the next part is to be read literally." Brethren, the Holy Ghost does not jumble metaphors and facts together. A typical book has plain indications that it is so intended, and when you come upon a literal passage in a typical chapter, it is always attached to a something else which is distinctly literal, so that you cannot, without violence to common sense, make a typical meaning out of it. The fact is, in reading this passage with an unbiassed judgment, having no purpose whatever to serve, having no theory to defend, — and I confess I have none, for I know but very little about mysteries to come, — I could not help seeing there are two literal resurrections here spoken of, one of the spirits of the just, and the other of the bodies of the wicked ; one of the saints who sleep in Jesus, whom God shall bring with him, and another of those who live and die impenitent, who perish in their sins.

1. Now as to the first privilege, the priority of resurrection. I think Scripture is exceedingly plain and explicit upon this point. You have perhaps imagined that all men will rise at the same moment; that the trump of the archangel will break open every grave at the same instant, and sound in the ear of every

sleeper at the identical moment. Such I do not think is the testimony of the Word of God. I think the Word of God teaches, and teaches indisputably, that the saints shall rise first. And be the interval of time whatever it may, whether the thousand years are literal years, or a very long period of time, I am not now about to determine; I have nothing to do except with the fact that there are two resurrections, a resurrection of the just, and afterwards of the unjust, — a time when the saints of God shall rise, an aftertime when the wicked shall rise to the resurrection of damnation. I shall now refer you to one or two passages in Scripture, and you will use your Bibles and follow me. First, let us look at the words of the apostle in that chapter which we use generally as a burial service, the first epistle to the Corinthians, xv. 20: — “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.” There has been an interval of two thousand years between “Christ the firstfruits” and the “afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming.” Why not then a thousand years between that first resurrection and “the end.” Here is a resurrection of those who are Christ’s, and of them only. As for the wicked, one would scarce know that they would rise at all from this passage, if it were not for the general statement, “All shall be made alive,” and even this may not be so comprehensive as at first sight it seems. It is enough for me that there is here a particular and exclusive resurrection of those who are Christ’s. Turn to another passage, which is perhaps plainer still; the first epistle to the Thessalonians, iv. 13: — “But I would not

have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent," — or have a preference beyond — "them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Here is nothing said whatever about the resurrection of the wicked: it is only stated that the dead in Christ shall rise first. Our apostle is evidently speaking of a first resurrection; and since we know that a first resurrection implies a second, and since we know that the wicked dead are to rise as well as the righteous dead, we draw the inference that the wicked dead shall rise at the second resurrection, after the interval between the two resurrections shall have been accomplished. Turn to Philippians iii., verses 8 and 11, and compare the two. "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." What does he mean there? Every one will rise, no orthodox Christian doubts that. The doctrine of a general resurrection is received by all the Christian Church. What, then, is this resurrection after which Paul was exerting himself, if by any means he might attain unto it? It could not be the general resurrection; he would attain unto that

live as he list. It must have been some superior resurrection, of which only those shall be partakers who have known Christ and the power of his resurrection, having been made conformable unto his death. I think you cannot interpret this passage, or give it any force of meaning, without you admit that there is to be a prior resurrection of the just before the resurrection of the unjust. If you will turn to a passage in Luke xx. 35, which probably is fresh upon your memories, you will find there something which I will venture to call a clear proof of a special resurrection. The Sadducees had proposed a difficulty as to the relationship of men and women in the future state, and Jesus here says, "But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection." Now, brethren, there is some worthiness necessary for this resurrection. Do you not perceive it? There is some distinction involved in being called the children of the resurrection. Now, again I say, you do not doubt but that all shall rise. In that sense, then, every man would be one of the children of the resurrection; in that sense, no worthiness would be required for resurrection at all. There must be, then, a resurrection for which worthiness is needed, a resurrection which shall be a distinguished privilege, which, being obtained, shall confer upon its possessor the distinguished and honourable title of a "child of the resurrection." It seems to me that this is plain enough, and can be put beyond all dispute. In chapter xiv. of the same gospel, in verse 14, you have a promise made to those who, when they make a feast, do not do it with the intention of getting anything in return. "When thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resur-

rection of the just." I would not insist upon it that this would prove that the just rose at a different time; but still there is to be a resurrection of the just, and on the other hand, there is to be a resurrection of the unjust; and the time of recompense for the righteous is to be the resurrection of the just, which is spoken of as being a particular period. He might just as well have said, "Thou shalt be recompensed at the general resurrection." There was no need to have said, "At the resurrection of the just," if the two are to happen at the same time. The words "of the just" are superfluous in the passage, unless they do refer to some era distinguished and distinct from the resurrection of the unjust. I will not say that this is any clear proof, but still, all these things put together, with other passages I might quote if time did not fail me, would, I think, establish upon a Scriptural basis the doctrine of the two resurrections. But I would refer to one more, which seems to me to be exceedingly clear, in John vi. 39, 40, 44, 54. In these verses the Saviour four times over speaks of his own believing people, and promises them a resurrection. "I will raise him up at the last day." Now, is there any joy or beauty in this, to the people of God in particular, unless there be a speciality in it for them? It is the lot of all to rise, and yet we have here a privilege for the elect! Surely, brethren, there is a different resurrection. Besides, there is yet a passage which now springs to my memory in the Hebrews, where the apostle, speaking of the trials of the godly, and their noble endurance, speaks of them as, "not accepting deliverance that they might obtain a better resurrection." The betterness was not in the after results of resurrection, but in the resurrection itself. How, then, could it be a better resurrection, unless there be some distinction between the resurrection of the saint and the resurrection of the sinner? Let the one be a resurrection of splendour; let the other be a resurrection of gloom and horror, and let there be a marked division between the two, that a sit

was in the beginning, it may be even to the end, the Lord hath put a difference between him that feareth God and him that feareth him not.

I am well aware that I have not been able to put the argument so well but that any antagonist may cavil at it; but I have been preaching to my own congregation rather than fighting with opponents, and I hope you will take these passages and weigh them for yourselves, and if they do not teach you that the dead in Christ shall rise first, do not believe me if I say they do. If you cannot perceive the fact yourself, if the Holy Spirit show it not unto you, why then read the passage again, and then find if you can another and a better meaning. I have no purpose to serve except to make the Scripture as plain to you as possible; and I say it yet again, I have not the shadow of a doubt in my own soul that these passages do teach us that there shall first of all be a resurrection concerning which it shall be said, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."

2. I now pass on to the second privilege here promised to the godly. The second death on them hath no power. This, too, is a literal death; none the less literal because its main terror is spiritual, for a spiritual death is as literal as a carnal death. The death which shall come upon the ungodly without exception can never touch the righteous. Oh, brethren, this is the best of all. As for the first resurrection, if Christ hath granted that to his people there must be something glorious in it if we cannot perceive it. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know when he shall appear we shall be like him." I think the glories of the first resurrection belong to the glories which shall be revealed in us rather than the glories that are revealed to us. What shall be the majesty of that form in which we shall rise, what the distinguished happiness we shall then enjoy, we can

but guess at a distance, we cannot know it to the full. But on this point we can understand what Scripture states, and understand this much well, that damnation, the second death, shall have no power on those who rise at the first resurrection. How should it? How can damnation fall on any but those who are sinners and are guilty of sin? But the saints are not guilty of sin. They have sinned like others, and they were by nature the children of wrath even as others. But their sin has been lifted from them: it was laid upon the scapegoats' head of old. He, the Eternal substitute, even our Lord Jesus, carried all their guilt and their iniquity into the wilderness of forgetfulness, where it shall never be found against them for ever. They wear the Saviour's righteousness, even as they have been washed in his blood; and what wrath can lie on the man who is not only guiltless through the blood, but is meretorious through imputed righteousness! Oh, arm of Justice, thou art nerveless to smite the blood-washed! Oh, ye flames of hell, how could even so much as the breath of your heat pass upon the man who is safe covered in the Saviour's wounds! How is it possible for you, O Deaths, Destructions, Horrors, Glooms, Plagues, and Terrors, so much as to flit like a cloud over the serene sky of the spirit which has found peace with God through the blood of Christ! No, brethren,

*"Bold shall I stand in that great day;
For who aught to my charge shall lay?
While, through thy blood, absolved I am
From sin's tremendous curse and shame."*

There shall be a second death; but over us it shall have no power. Do you understand the beauty of the picture? As if we might walk through the flames of hell and they should have no power to devour us any more than when the holy children

paced with ease over the hot coals of Nebuchadnezzar's seven times heated furnace. Death may bend his bow and fit the arrow to the string. But we laugh at thee, O Death! and thee, O hell, we will despise! for over both of you, ye enemies of man, we shall be more than conquerors through him that hath loved us. We shall stand invulnerable and invincible, defying and laughing to scorn our every foe. And all this because we are washed from sin and covered with a spotless righteousness.

But there is another reason why the second death can have no power on the believer; because when the prince of this world cometh against us then, we shall be able to say what our Master did, "He hath nothing in me." When we shall rise again we shall be freed from all corruption: no evil tendencies shall remain in us. "I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed: for the Lord dwelleth in Zion." "Without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing," without even the shadow of a spot which the eye of omniscience could discover, we shall be as pure as Adam before his fall, as holy as the Immaculate manhood when it first came from the divine hand. We shall be better than Adam for Adam might sin, but we shall be so established in goodness, in truth, and in righteousness, that we shall not even be tempted again, much less shall we have any fear of falling. We shall stand spotless and faultless at the last great day. Brethren, lift up your heads. Contending with sin, cast down with doubts, lift up your heads, and wipe the tears from your eyes. There are days coming, the like of which angels have not seen, but you shall see them. There are times coming when your spirits shall no more fear the chain, nor shall ye even remember the wormwood and the gall.

*"What, though your inbred sins require
Your flesh to see the dust:
Yet as the Lord your Saviour rose*

So all his followers must."

And when they rise they shall leave the old Adam behind them. Blessed day! One of the most blessed parts of heaven — of heaven above or of heaven below — will be freedom from the tendency to sin, a total death to that old nature which has been our plague and woe.

3. There is yet a third privilege in the text, upon which I shall speak but briefly. I believe this to be also one of the glories that shall be revealed. The third privilege of the text is, "They shall reign with him a thousand years." Here is another point upon which there has been a long and very vigorous contention. It was believed in the early Church, I do not know whether there is any Scriptural foundation for the precise date they fixed, that the seventh thousand years of the world's history would be a Sabbath; that as there were six days of toil in the week, and the seventh was a day of rest, so the world would have six thousand years of toil and sorrow, and the seventh thousand would be a thousand years of rest. I say I do not know that there is any Scripture for that; I do know that there is none against it. I believe the Lord himself shall come, "but of that day and of that hour knoweth no man, no not even the angels of God." And I think it is idle to attempt to fix even the year or even the century when Christ shall come. Our business is to expect him always, to be always looking for his appearing, watching for his coming; that whether he come at cock-crow, or midnight, or at morning watch, we may be ready to go in with the wise virgins into the marriage feast, and to rejoice with our beloved. If there have been any dates given, I am not able at present to find them out. All these dates and mysteries I can leave to much more learned men, and men who give their whole time to it. The book of Revelation needs another expounder besides those who have loaded our shelves until

they groan, for they have generally made confusion worse confounded. Their expositions have been rather “an obvelation” than a revelation; they have rather darkened counsel by words without knowledge than made the dark things plain. I am prepared to go about as far as my predecessor, Dr. Gill, went; as far as the old fathers of the Church went; as far as Baxter and Bunyan would have gone, but to go no further than that. Yet I think we may say this morning, there is in the text a distinct promise that the saints are to reign with Christ a thousand years; and I believe they are to reign with him upon this earth. There are some passages which I think obtain a singular fulness of meaning if this be true. Turn to Psalm xxxvii. 10, 11. It is that Psalm where David has been fretting himself, because of the evil doers, and their prosperity upon the earth. He says, “For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.” You can interpret that to mean that the meek man shall enjoy much more of this world’s goods than the sinner, and that he shall have abundance of peace. But I think you have given it a lean meaning, a very lean meaning indeed. If it be true that these meek ones shall yet possess this very earth, and that here, in the abundance of peace through the Messiah’s reign, they shall rejoice in it, I think you have found a fuller meaning, and one which has a God-like meaning. So it is that God’s promises always have a wider meaning than we can conceive; now, in this case, if it only mean that the meek are to have what they gain in this life, which is very little indeed, if they are only to have what they enjoy here upon earth, which is so little, that I think if in this life only they have hope, they are of men the most miserable— if it only mean that, then the promise means less than we might conceive it to mean; but if it mean that they shall have glory even here, then you have given

to it one of the widest meanings you can conceive, a meaning like the meanings usually given to the promises of God— wide, large, extensive, and worthy of himself. Brethren, the meek do not inherit the earth to any great degree at present, and we look for this in another age. Let me quote the language of Christ, lest you should think this passage peculiar to the Old Testament dispensation, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” How? where? when? Not now certainly, not in Christ’s days, not in apostolic times by any means. What did the meek inherit, brethren? Faggot, flames, racks, pincers, dungeons. Their inheritance, indeed, was nothing. They were destitute, afflicted, tormented; they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; and if the meek are ever to inherit the earth, certainly it must be in some age to come, for they have never inherited it yet. Turn again to a passage in Revelation v. 9, 10: — “And they sung a new song.” It is the very song we sang this morning, and it runs thus, “Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation ; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.” Whether any one disputes the genuineness of these words, I do not know; but if they mean anything at all, if the Holy Spirit meant to set forth any meaning, surely it must have been that the people of Christ shall reign upon the earth. Besides, remember our Saviour’s words in Matthew xix. 28, where in answer to a question which had been put by Peter as to what his saints should have as the result of their losses for his sake, he said unto them, “ Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s

sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life." It seems that Christ here is to come in the regeneration, when in a new-born world there shall be joys fitted for the new-born spirits; and then there shall be splendours and glories for the apostles first, and for all those who by any means have suffered any losses for Christ Jesus. You find such passages as these in the Word of God, "The Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously." You find another like this in Zachariah, "My God shall come with the multitude of his saints." Indeed, I could not now take up your time by quoting many passages in which it seems to me that nothing but the triumph on the very spot where they have fought the battle, nothing but the glory in the very place where they have had the tug of war, will meet the meaning of God's Word. I do look forward to this with joy, that though I may sleep in Christ before my Master come, and I know not whether that shall be or no, yet I shall rise at the day of his appearing, and shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just if I have truly and faithfully served him ; and that recompense shall be, to be made like unto him, and to partake of his glories before the eyes of men, and to reign with him during the thousand years. Dr. Watts, I believe, understood that Christ is to come literally, for he says,

*"Nor doth it yet appear
How great we must be made;
But when we see our Saviour here,
We shall be like our Head.
A hope so much divine
May trials well endure,
May purge our souls from sense and sin
As Christ the Lord is pure."*

But to gather up what I have said, and to make one other observation. This doctrine which I have preached just now is not an unpractical one. For throughout the New Testament, whenever the apostle wants to stir up men to patience, to labour, to hope, to endurance, to holiness, he generally says something about the advent of Christ. "Be patient, brethren," says he, "for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." "Let your moderation be known unto all men, the Lord is at hand." "Judge nothing before the time, till the Lord come." "When the great Shepherd shall appear, ye also shall appear with him in glory." Brethren, I think we shall do wrong if we make too much of this; but we shall do equally wrong if we make too little of it. Let us give it a fair place in our thoughts, and especially let those of us who fear God and believe in Jesus take this to be a window through which we can look, when the house is dark and our home is full of misery, let us look to the time when we shall rise among the first, following Christ the firstfruits, when we shall reign with Christ, sharing in his glories, and when we shall know that the second death over us hath no power.

II. I shall now turn to the second part of the discourse briefly. To the ungodly **THREE THINGS IN SIMPLICITY.**

Sinner, you have heard us speak of the resurrection of the righteous. To you the word "resurrection" has no music. There is no flash of joy in your spirit when you hear that the dead shall rise again. But oh, I pray thee lend me thine ear while I assure thee in God's name that thou shalt rise. Not only shall your soul live — you have perhaps become so brutish that you forget you have a soul — but your body itself shall live. Those eyes that have been full of lust shall see sights of horror; those ears which have listened to the temptations of the evil one, shall hear the thunders of the day of judgment; those very feet that bare you to the theatre, shall attempt, but utterly fail to sustain

you when Christ shall sit in judgment. Think not when your body is put into the soil that you have done with it. It has been partner with your soul in sin; it shall be sharer with your soul in the punishment. He is able to cast both body and soul into hell. The heathens believed in the immortality of the soul. We need not therefore prove what a heathen could conceive. It is the doctrine of the resurrection of the body which is peculiar to Christianity. You are not prepared to cast away the revelation of God I know. You receive that book as being God's book, and it tells me that all the dead, both small and great, shall rise. When the archangels trump shall sound, the whole of the old inhabitants of the world before the flood shall rise out of the ocean. The buried palaces, the sunken homes, shall all give up the multitude who once married and were given in marriage, until Noah entered into the ark. Up shall rise from the great deeps of the fathomless sea, thousands upon thousands of men who have slept now these three and four thousand years. Every churchyard, too, where men have been quietly buried with Christian rites, but yet were unchristian still, shall yield up its dead. The battle-field shall yield a mighty harvest, a harvest which was sown in blood, and which shall be reaped in tempest. Every place where man has lived and man has died shall see the dying quickened once again, and flesh and blood once more instinct with life. But the main thing with you is that you will be there. Living and dying as you now are, ungodly and unconverted, the most awful curse that could fall on you, with the exception of the damnation of your soul, is the sure and certain resurrection of your body. Go, now, and paint it if you will, and seek a beauty which the worm shall loathe. Go and pamper your body; drink the sweet and eat the fat. Go and luxuriate and indulge it in ease. Oh, sir, you may well pamper your bodies, for there is short enough time for your body to have mirth in; and when that short time is over thou shalt drink

another wine — the dregs of the cup of God's wrath, which the wicked shall drain to the last drop. Satisfy thine ears with music now; thou shalt soon hear nothing but the howling of the damned! Go thou thy way, eat, drink, and be merry; but for all these the Lord shall bring thee into judgment — sevenfold for all thy sinful pleasures, yea seventy times seven, for all thy joys of lust, and wickedness and crime, shall the Lord be avenged on thee, in the great and terrible day of his wrath. Sinner, think thou of this, and when thou sinnest think of the resurrection.

But after the resurrection, according to the text, comes the judgment. You have cursed God. The oath died away. No, sir, it did not; it imprinted itself upon the great book of God's remembrance. You have entered the chamber of wantonness, or the hall of infidelity; you have walked through the stews of crime, and through the stench and filth of the brothel. You have wandered into sin and plunged into it, thinking it would all die with the day; that as the night covers up the sights of the day, so the night of death should cover up the deeds of your day of life. Not so. The books shall be opened. I think I see you with your blanching cheeks, closing your eyes because you dare not look upon the Judge when he opens that page where stands your history. I hear yon sinner, boldest among you all. He is crying, "Ye rocks fall on me." There they stand, sublime and dread, those granite rocks; he would rather be crushed than stand there before the avenging eye; but the mountains will not loosen, their flinty bowels feel no pangs of sympathy, they will not move. You stand while the fiery eye looks you through and through, and the dread voice reads on, and on, and on, your every act, and word, and thought. I see you as the shameful crime is read, and men and angels hear. I see your horror as a nameless deed is told, in terms explicit, which none can misunderstand. I hear your thoughts brought out — that lust, that murder which was in the thought, but never grew into the

deed. And you are all this while astonished like Belshazzar, when he saw the writing on the wall and his loins were loose, and he was terribly afraid. So shall it be with you; and yet again, and again, and again, shall you send up that awful shriek, "Hide us! hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb!"

But then cometh the end, the last of all. After death the judgment; after judgment the damnation. If it be a dreadful thing to live again, if it be a more dreadful thing still to spend the first day of that life in the grand assize of God, how much more awful shall it be when the sentence is pronounced, and the terror of punishment shall begin! We believe that the souls of the wicked are already tormented, but this judgment will cast both body and soul into the lake of fire. Men and women, ye who fear not God, and have no faith in Jesus, I cannot picture to you damnation. Across it let me draw a curtain. But though we must not picture it, I pray you realize it. When Martin has painted some of his sublime pictures, he has generally heightened the effect by masses of darkness. Surely, this is the way in which God has painted hell, rather by masses of darkness than by definiteness of light. This much we know, that hell is a place of absence from God — a place for the development of sin, where every passion is unbridled, every lust unrestrained — a place where God punishes night and day those who sin night and day — a place where there is never sleep, or rest, or hope — a place where a drop of water is denied, though thirst shall burn the tongue — a place where pleasure never breathed, where light never dawned, where anything like consolation was never heard of — a place where the gospel is denied, where mercy droops her wings and dies — a place where vengeance reigns and shakes his chains, and brandishes his sword — a place of fury and of burning — a place, the like of which imagination hath not pictured. May God grant it may be

a place which you shall never see, and whose dread you shall never feel. Sinner, instead of preaching it to thee, let me bid thee fly from it. Die, sinner, and flight from hell becomes impossible; thou art lost, then, eternally. Oh, while yet thou art on praying ground, I pray thee, think on thy end. "Because she remembered not her latter end, she came down wonderfully." Let it not be said thus of you. Think! think! this warning may be the last you shall ever hear. You may never be spared to come to a place of worship again. Perhaps, while you sit here, the last sands are dropping from the hour glass; and then, no more warning can be given, because redemption and escape shall be impossible to you.

Soul, I lift up before thee now, Christ the crucified one — "Whosoever believeth on him shall never perish, but hath eternal life." As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so this morning the Son of Man is lifted up. Sinner, see his wounds. Look to his thorn-crowned head. See the nails of his hands and of his feet. Do you perceive him? Hark! while he cries, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" Listen again, while he says, "It is finished! It is finished!" Salvation finished! And now, salvation is freely preached to thee. Believe on Christ and thou shall be saved. Trust him, and all the horrors of the future shall have no power over you; but the splendours of this prophecy shall be fulfilled, be they what they may. Oh that this morning some of you may trust my Master for the first time in your lives; and this done, you need not curiously enquire what the future shall be, but you may sit down calmly and say,

*"Come when it will;
my soul is on the rock of ages;
it fears no ill;
it fears no tempest;
it defies all pain.*

Come quickly!
Come quickly!
Even so,
come quickly,
Lord Jesus."

FIFTY-EIGHT
GREAT WHITE THRONE

SERMON GIVEN ON AUGUST 12, 1866

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 20:11

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 12

“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.”

REVELATION 20:11.

MANY of the visions which John saw are very obscure, and although a man who is assured of his own salvation may possibly be justified in spending his days in endeavouring to interpret them, yet I am sure of this, that it will not be a profitable task for unconverted persons. They have no time to spare for speculations, for they have not yet made sure of positive certainties. They need not dive into difficulties, for they have

not yet laid a foundation of simplicities by faith in Christ Jesus. Better far to meditate upon the atonement than to be guessing at the little horn, and better far to know the Lord Jesus in his power to save, than to fabricate an ingenious theory upon the number of the beast. But this particular vision is so instructive, so unattended by serious difficulties, that I may invite all here present to consider it, and the more so because it has to do with matters which concern our own eternal prospects. It may be, if God the Holy Spirit shall illuminate the eyes of our faith to look and see that “great white throne and him that sat upon it,” that we may reap so much benefit from the sight as for ever to make the arches of heaven ring with gratitude that we were brought in this world to look at the “great white throne,” for by so doing we shall not be afraid to look upon it in the day when the Judge shall sit, and the quick and dead shall stand before him.

I shall, first, endeavour to explain what John saw; and then, in the second place, I shall try to set forth the effect which I think would be produced by this sight if the eyes of our faith should now be fixed thereon.

I. First, then, I have to call your very earnest attention to WHAT JOHN SAW. It was a scene of the last day, — that wondrous day whose coming none can tell.

*“For, as a thief unheard, unseen, it steals
Through night’s dark shade.”*

When the eagle-eyed seer of Patmos, being in the Spirit, looked aloft into the heavens, he saw a throne, from which I gather that there is a throne of moral government over the sons of men, and that he who sits upon it presides over all the inhabitants of this world. There is a throne whose dominion reaches from Adam in Paradise down to “the last man,” whoever he

may be. We are not without a governor, lawgiver, and judge. This world is not left so that men may do in it as they will, without a legislator, without an avenger, without One to give reward or to inflict punishment. The sinner, in his blindness, looks, but he sees no throne; and therefore he cries, "I will live as I list, for there is none to call me to account;" but John, with illuminated eye, distinctly saw a throne, and a personal ruler upon it, who sat there to call his subjects to account. When our faith looks through the glass of revelation it sees a throne too. It were well for us if we felt more fully the influence of that ever-present throne. That "the Lord reigneth" is true, believer, to-night, and true at all times. There is a throne whereon sitteth the King eternal, immortal, invisible; the world is governed by laws made and kept in force by an intelligent lawgiver. There is a moral governor. Men are accountable, and will be brought to account at the last great day, when they shall all be either rewarded or punished. "I saw a great white throne." How this invests the actions of men with solemnity! If we were left to do exactly as we willed without being called to account for it, it were wise even then to be virtuous, for rest assured it is best for ourselves that we should be good, and it is in itself malady enough to be evil. But we are not so left. There is a law laid down, to break which involves a penalty. There is a lawgiver who looks down and spies every action of man, and who does not suffer one single word or deed to be omitted from his notebook. That governor is armed with power; he is soon coming to hold his assize, and every responsible agent upon the face of the earth must appear at his bar and receive, as we are told, "according to the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or whether they be evil." Let it, then, be gathered from the text that there is in very deed a personal and real moral governor of the world, an efficient and suitable ruler, not a mere name, not a myth, not an empty office, but a person who sits on the throne,

who judges right, and who will carry out that judgment ere long. Now, brethren and sisters, we know that this moral governor is God himself, who has an undisputed right to reign and rule. Some thrones have no right to be, and to revolt from them is patriotism; but the best lover of his race delights the most in the monarchy of Heaven. Doubtless there are dynasties which are tyrannies, and governors who are despots; but none may dispute the right of God to sit upon the throne, or wish that another hand held the sceptre. He created all, and shall he not judge all? He had a right, as Creator, to lay down his laws, and, as those laws are the very pattern of everything that is good and true, he had, therefore, because of this an eternal right to govern, in addition to the right which belonged to him as Creator. He is the Judge of all, who must do right from a necessity of his nature. Who else, then, should sit upon the throne, and who shall dare to claim to do so? He may cast down the gauntlet to all his creatures, and say, "I am God, and beside me there is none else:" if he reveals the thunder of his power, his creatures must silently own that he is Lord alone. None can venture to say that this throne is not founded upon right. Moreover, there are some thrones on which the kings, however right, are deficient in might, but this is not the case with the King of kings. We constantly see little princes whose crowns fit their heads so ill that they cannot keep them on their brows; but our God has might invincible as well as right infallible. Who shall meet him in the battle? Shall the stubble defy the fire, or shall the wax make war with the flame? Jehovah can easily swallow up his enemies when they set themselves in battle array against him. "Behold he toucheth the hills, and they smoke; he looketh upon the mountains, and they tremble; he breaketh Leviathan in pieces in the depths of the sea. The winds are his chariots, and the tempests are his messengers. At his bidding there is day, and at his will night covereth the earth. Who shall stay his

hand, or say unto him, "What doest thou?" His throne is founded in right and supported by might. You have justice and truth to settle it, but you have omnipotence and wisdom to be its guards, so that it cannot be moved. In addition to this, his throne is one from the power of which none can escape. The sapphire throne of God, at this moment, is revealed in heaven, where adoring angels cast their crowns before it; and its power is felt on earth, where the works of creation praise the Lord. Even those who acknowledge not the divine government are compelled to feel it, for he doeth as he wills, not only among the angels in heaven, but among the inhabitants of this lower world. Hell feels the terror of that throne. Those chains of fire, those pangs unutterable, are the awful shadow of the throne of Deity; as God looks down upon the lost, the torment that flashes through their souls darts from his holiness, which cannot endure their sins. The influence of that throne, then, is found in every world where spirits dwell, and in the realms of inanimate nature it bears rule. Every leaf that fades in the trackless forest trembles at the Almighty's bidding, and every coral insect that dwelleth in the unfathomable depths of the sea feels and acknowledges the presence of the all-present King. So, then, my brethren, if such is the throne which John saw, see how impossible it will be for you to escape from its judgment when the great day of assize shall be proclaimed, and the Judge shall issue his summons, bidding you appear. Whither can the enemies of God flee? if up to heaven their high-flown impudence could carry them, his right hand of holiness would hurl them thence, or, if under hell's profoundest wave they dive, to seek a sheltering grave, his left hand would pluck them out of the fire, to expose them to the fiercer light of his countenance. Nowhere is there a refuge from the Most High. The morning beams cannot convey the fugitive so swiftly as the almighty Pursuer could follow him; neither can the mysterious lightning

flash, which annihilates time and space, journey so rapidly as to escape his far-reaching hand. "If I mount up to heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, thou art there." It was said of the Roman empire under the Caesars that the whole world was only one great prison for Caesar, for if any man offended the emperor it was impossible for him to escape. If he crossed the Alps, could not Caesar find him out in Gaul? If he sought to hide himself in the Indies, even the swarthy monarchs there knew the power of the Roman arms, so that they would give no shelter to a man who had incurred imperial vengeance. And yet, perhaps, a fugitive from Rome might have prolonged his miserable life by hiding in the dens and caves of the earth. But oh! sinner, there is no hiding from God. The mountains cannot cover you from him, even if they would, neither can the rocks conceal you. See, then, at the very outset how this throne should awe our minds with terror. Founded in right, sustained by might, and universal in its dominion, look ye and see the throne which John of old beheld.

This, however, is but the beginning of the vision. The text tells us that it was a "white throne" and I would call your attention to that. "I saw a great white throne." Why white? Does not this indicate its immaculate purity? There is no other white throne, I fear, to be found. The throne of our own happy land I believe to be as white and as pure as any throne might well be on earth, but there have been years, even in the annals of that throne, when it was stained with blood, and not many reigns back it was black with debauchery. Not always was it the throne of excellence and purity, and even now, though our throne possesses a lustrous purity, rare enough among earthly thrones, yet in the sight of God there must be in everything that is earthly something that is impure, and therefore the throne is not white to him. As for many other thrones that are still existing, we know that with them all is not white; this is neither the

day nor the hour for us to call the princes to the bar of God, but there are some of them who will have much to answer for, because in their schemes of aggrandisement they took no account of the blood which would be shed,, or of the rights which would be violated. Principle seldom moves the royal mind, but the knavish law of policy is the basis of kingcraft; a policy worthy of highwaymen and burglars, and some kings are little. On the continent of Europe there are not a few thrones which I might describe as either black, or crimson, as I think of the turpitude of the conduct of the monarch, or of the blood through which he has waded his way to dominion. But this is a great white throne, a throne of hallowed monarchy that is not stained with blood nor defiled with injustice. Why, then, is it white for purity? Is it not because the King who sits on it is pure? Hark to the thrice sacred hymn of the cherubic band and the seraphic choir, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth." Creatures who are perfectly spotless themselves unceasingly reverence and adore the yet superior holiness of the great King. He is too great to need to be unjust, and he is too good to be unkind. This King has done no wrong, and can do no wrong, but he is the only King of whom this can be said without fiction. He who sits on this white throne is himself the essence of holiness, justice, truth, and love. O fairest of all thrones! who would not be a willing subject of thy peerless government? Moreover, the throne is pure, because the law the Judge dispenses is perfect. There is no fault in the statute-book of God. When the Lord shall come to judge the earth, there will be found no decree that bears too hardly upon any one of his creatures. """" The statutes of the Lord are right;" they are true and righteous altogether. That book of the ten commands in which you find a summary of the divine will, who can improve it? Who can find anything in excess in it, or point out aught that is wanting? "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the

soul,” and well may that be a white throne from which there emanates such a law. But you know that with a good law and a good lawgiver, yet sometimes the throne may make mistakes, and it may be stained by ignorance, if not by wilful injustice. But the sentence which shall go forth from this great white throne, shall be so consistent with justice that even the condemned culprit himself must give his unwilling assent to it. “They stood speechless,” it is said; speechless because they could neither bear the sentence nor in any way impugn it. It is a white throne, since never was a verdict delivered from it of which the culprit had a right to complain. Perhaps there are some here who view this as a matter of hope, but to ungodly persons it will be the very reverse. Oh! sinner, if you had to be judged before an impure tribunal, you might, perhaps, escape; if the King were not holy, unholiness might, perhaps, go unpunished; if the law were not perfect, offences might be condoned; or if the sentence were not just you might, through partiality, escape. But where everything is so pure and white—

*“Careless sinner,
What will there become of thee?”*

I have thought, too, that perhaps this throne is said to be a white throne to indicate that it will be eminently conspicuous. You will have noticed that a white object can be seen from a very great distance. You may have observed, perhaps, on the Welsh mountains, a white cottage far away, standing out conspicuously, for the Welsh like to make their cottages intensely white, so that though you would not have perceived it, had it been left of a stone colour, you see it at once, for the bright whitewashed walls catch your eye. I suppose that a marksman would prefer a white object to aim at before almost any other colour. And this great white throne will be so

conspicuous that all the millions who were dead, but who shall rise at the sound of the last trumpet, shall all see it, nor shall it be possible for a single eye to close itself against the sight. We must see it; it shall be so striking a sight that none of us will be able to prevent its coming before us; "every eye shall see him." Possibly it is called a white throne because of its being such a convincing contrast to all the colours of this sinful human life. There stand the crowd, and there is the great white throne. What can make them see their blackness more thoroughly than to stand there in contrast with the perfections of the law, and the Judge before whom they are standing? Perhaps that throne, all glistening, will reflect each man's character. As each unforgiven man shall look at that white throne, its dazzling whiteness will overcome him, and cover him with confusion and with terror when he sees his own defilement in contrast with it. "O God!" saith he, "how can I bear to be judged by such a one as thou art? I could face the judgment-seat of my fellows, for I could see imperfections in my judges, but I cannot face thee, thou dread Supreme, for the awful whiteness of thy throne, and the terrible splendour of thy holiness utterly overcome me. Who am I, sinner as I am, that I should dare to stand before that great white throne!"

The next word that is used by way of adjective is "great" It was a "great white throne." You scarcely need me to tell you that it is called a great white throne because of the greatness of him who sits upon it. Speak of the greatness of Solomon? He was but a petty prince. Speak of the throne of the Mogul or his Celestial Majesty of China, or of the thrones of Rome and Greece before which multitudes of beings assembled? They are nothing, mere representatives of associations of the grasshoppers of the world, who are as nothing in the sight of the Lord Jehovah. A throne filled by a mortal is but a shadow of dominion. This will be a great throne because on it will sit the great

God of earth, and heaven, and hell, the King eternal, immortal, invisible, who shall judge the world in righteousness, and his people with equity. Brethren, you will see that this will be a "great white throne" when we remember the culprits who will be brought before it; not a handful of criminals, but millions upon millions, "multitudes, multitudes, in the Valley of Decision;" and these not all of the lesser sort, not serfs and slaves alone whose miserable bodies rested from their oppressors in the silent grave; but the great ones of the earth shall be there; not alone the down-trodden serf who toiled for nought, and felt it sweet to die, but his tyrant master who fattened on his unrewarded toils shall be there; not alone the multitudes who marched to battle at their master's bidding, and who fell beneath the shot and the shell, but the Emperors and Kings who planned the conflict shall be there; crowned heads no greater than heads uncrowned. Men who were demigods among their fellows shall mix with their slaves, and be made as vile as they! What a marvellous procession! With what awe the imagination of it strikes the heart! What a pompous appearing! Aha! aha! ye down-trodden multitudes, the great Leveller has put you all upon a footing now! Death laid you in one equal grave, and now judgment finds you standing at one equal bar, to receive the sentence of one who fears no king, and dreads no tyrant, who has no respect of persons, but who deals justice alike to all. Can you picture the sight? Land and sea are covered with the living who once were dead. Hell is empty, and the grave has lost its victims! What a sight will that be! Xerxes on his throne with a million marching before him, must have beheld a grand spectacle, but what will this be? No flaunting banner, but the ensigns of eternal majesty. No gaudy courtiers, but assembled angels! No sound of drum nor roar of culverin, but the blast of the archangel's trumpet, and the harping of ten thousand times ten thousand holy ones. There will be unri-

valled splendour it is true, but not that of heraldry and war; mere tinsel and gewgaw shall have all departed, and in their place there shall be the splendour of the flashing lightning, and the deep bass of the thunder. Jesus the Man of Sorrows, with all his angels with him shall descend, the pomp of heaven being revealed among the sons of men.

It will be a great white throne, because of the matters that will be tried there. It will be no mere quarrel about a suit in Chancery, or an estate in jeopardy. Our souls will have to be tried there; our future, not for an age, not for one single century, but for ever and for ever. Upon those balances shall hang heaven and hell; to the right shall be distributed triumph without end, to the left destruction and confusion without a pause, and the destiny of every man and woman shall be positively declared from that tremendous throne! Can you perceive the greatness of it? You must measure heaven; you must fathom hell, you must compass eternity, but until you can do this you cannot know the greatness of this great white throne; great, last of all, because throughout eternity there shall always be a looking back to the transactions of that day. That day shall be unto you, ye saints, "the beginning of days," when he shall say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father." And that day shall be to you who perish the beginning of days too; just as that famous night of old in Egypt, when the firstborn were spared in every house where the lamb had shed its blood, was the first of days to Israel, but to Egypt the night when the firstborn felt the avenging angel's sword was a dread beginning of nights for ever. Many a mother reckoned from that night when the destroyer came, and so shall you reckon throughout a dread eternity from the day when you see this great white throne.

Turn not away your eyes from the magnificent spectacle till you have seen the glorious Person mentioned in the words, "And him that sat on it." I wonder whether anything I have said

has made you solemnly to think of the great day. I am afraid I cannot speak so as to get at your hearts, and if not I had better be silent; but do now for a moment think upon him who sat upon the great white throne. The most fitting one in all the world will sit upon that throne. It will be God, but hearken, it will also be man. "He shall judge the world by this man. Christ Jesus, according to my gospel," says the apostle. The judge most needs be God. Who but God were fit to judge so many, and to judge so exactly? The throne is too great for any but for him of whom it is written, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is thy sceptre." Christ Jesus, the Son of God, will judge, and he will judge as man as well as God; and how fitting it is that it should be so! As man he knows our infirmities, he understands our hearts, and we cannot object to this, that our Judge should be himself like unto us. Who better could judge righteous judgment than one who is "bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh"? And then, there is this fitness about it; he is not only God and man, but he is the man, the man of men, of all men the most manly, the type and pattern of manhood. He will be the test in his own person, for if a man be like Christ, that man is right, but if a man be otherwise than Christ-like, that man deserves to be condemned. That wondrous Judge needs only look upon his own character to read the law, and to review his own actions to discern whether other men's actions be right or wrong. The thoughts of many hearts were revealed by Christ on earth, and that same Christ shall make an open exhibition of men at the last great day. He shall judge them, he shall discern their spirits, he shall find out the joints and the marrow of their being; the thoughts and intents of the heart he shall lay bare. Even you, believer, will pass the test before him; let no man deceive you with the delusion that you will not be judged: the sheep appeared before the great dividing Shepherd as well as the goats, those who used their talents were called to

account as well as he who buried his pound, and the disciples themselves were warned that their idle words would bring them into judgment. Nor need you fear a public trial. Innocence courts the light. You are not saved by being allowed to be smuggled into heaven untested and unproved, but you will in the righteousness of Jesus pass the solemn test with joy. It may not be at the same moment as the wicked that the righteous shall be judged (I shall not contend for particulars), but I am clear that they will be judged, and that the blood and righteousness of Jesus are provided for this very cause, that they may find mercy of the Lord in that day. O sinner! it is far otherwise with you, for your ruin is sure when the testing time comes. There will be no witnesses needed to convict you, for the Judge knows all. The Christ whom you despised will judge you, the Saviour whose mercy you trampled on, in the fountain of whose blood you would not wash, the despised and rejected of men—it is he who shall judge righteous judgment to you, and what will he say but this, — “As for these mine enemies, who would not that I would reign over them, cut them in pieces before my eyes!”

II. I want a few minutes — and I have but too few left — to **DRAW THE INFERENCES WHICH FLOW FROM SUCH A SIGHT AS THIS**, and so turn the vision to practical account.

Believer in Christ, a word in thine ear. Canst thou see the great white throne, and him that sits upon it? Methinks I see it now. Then, let me search myself. Whatever profession I may make, I shall have to face that great white throne. I have passed the elders; I have been approved by the pastor; I stand accepted by the church; but that great white throne is not passed yet. I have borne a reputable character among my fellow-Christians; I have been asked to pray in public, and my prayers have been much admired, but I have not yet been weighed in the last

balances, and what if I should be found wanting! Brother Christian, what about thy private prayers? Canst thou live in neglect of the closet, and yet remember that thy prayers will be tried before the great white throne? Is thy Bible left unread in private? Is thy religion nothing but a public show and sham? Remember the great white throne, for mere pretence will not pass there. Brother Christian, what about thy heart and thy treasure? Art thou a mere money-hunter? Dost thou live as others live? Is thy delight in the fleeting present? Dost thou have dealings with the throne of heaven? Hast thou a stony heart towards divine things? Hast thou little love to Christ? Dost thou make an empty profession, and nothing more? Oh, think of that great white throne, that great white throne 1 Why, there are some of you, who, when I preach a stirring sermon, feel afraid to come again to hear me. Ah! but if you are afraid of my voice, how will you bear his voice who shall speak in tones of thunder? Do searching sermons seem to go through you like a blast of the north wind, chilling your very marrow and curdling your blood? Oh! but what must it be to stand before that dread tribunal? Are you doubting now? What will you be then? Can you not bear a little self-examination? How will you bear that Cod-examination? If the scales of earth tell you that you are wanting, what message will the scales of heaven give you? I do conjure you, fellow professors, speaking to you as I desire to speak now to my own heart, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"

Having spoken a word to the Christian, I should like to say to every one of you, in remembrance of this great white throne shun hypocrisy. Are you tempted to be baptized though you are not a believer, in order to please parents and friends? Beware of that great white throne, and bethink you how your insult to

God will look at that great day! Are you persuaded to put on the cloak of religion because it will help your business, or make you seem respectable? Beware, thou hypocrite, beware of that great white throne; for of all the terrors that shall come forth from it, there shall be none more severe than those which shall scathe the mere professor, who made a profession of religion for gain. If you must be damned, be damned anyhow sooner than as a hypocrite; for they deserve the deepest hell who for gain make a profession of godliness. The ruin of Byends and Hypocrisy will be just indeed. O ye highflying professors, whose wings are fastened on with wax, beware of the sun which will surely pour its heat upon you, for fearful will be your fall from so great a height!

But there are some of you who say, "I do not make any profession of religion." Still my text has a word to you. Still I want you to judge your actions by that last great day. O sir, how about that night of sin? "No," say you, "never mind it; bring it not to my remembrance." It shall be brought to thy remembrance, and that deed of sin shall be published far wider than upon the house-tops, gazetted to all the multitudes who have ever lived since the first man, and thine infamy shall become a byword and a proverb among all created beings. What think you of this, you secret sinners? You lovers of wantonness and chambering? Ah! young man, you have commenced by filching, but you will go on to be a downright thief. It is known, sir, and "be sure your sin will find you out." Young woman, you have begun to dally with sin, and you think none has seen you, but the most Mighty One has seen your acts and heard your words; there is no curtain between him and your sin. He sees you clearly, and what will you do with these sins of yours that you think have been concealed? "It was many years ago," you tell me. Ay, but though buried these many years to you, they are all alive to him, for everything is present to the all-seeing God; and

your forgotten deeds shall one day stand out present to you also. My hearers, I conjure you do nothing which you would not do if you thought God saw you, for he does see you. Oh! look at your actions in the light of the judgment. Oh! that secret tippling of yours, how will that look when God reveals it? That private lust of yours which nobody knows of; how would you dare to do it if you recollected that God knows it? Young man, it is a secret, a fearful secret, and you would not whisper it in any one's ear; but it shall be whispered, nay, it shall be thundered out before the world! I pray thee, friend, think of this. There is an observer who takes notes of all that we do, and will publish all to an assembled universe.

And as for us all, are we ready to meet that last great day? I had many things to say unto you, but I cannot keep you to say them now, lest ye grow weary; but if to-night the trumpet should be sounded, what would be your state of mind? Suppose that now every ear in this place should be startled with a blast most loud and dread, and a voice were heard, —

*“Come to judgment,
Come to judgment, come away.”*

Supposing some of you could hide in the vaults and in the foundations, would not many of you rush to the concealment? How few of us might go down these aisles walking steadily into the open air and saying, “I am not afraid of judgment, for ‘there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.’” Brethren and sisters, I hope there are some of us who could go gladly to that judgment seat, even if we had to traverse the jaws of death to reach it. I hope there are some of us who can sing in our hearts—

“Bold shall I stand in that great day;

*For who aught to my charge shall lay?
While, through thy blood, absolved I am
From sin's tremendous curse and blame."*

It might put many of us much about to say that. It is easy to speak of full assurance, but, believe me, it is not quite so easy to have it in right down earnest in trying times. If some of you get the finger-ache your confidence oozes out at your joints, and if you have but a little sickness you think, "Ah! it may be cholera, what shall I do?" Can you not bear to die, how then will you bear to live for ever? Could you not look death in the face without a shudder; then how will you endure the judgment? Could you gaze upon death, and feel that he is your friend and not your foe? Could you put a skull upon your dressing-table, and commune with it as your *Memento mori*? Oh! it may well take the bravest of you to do this, and the only sure way is to come as we are to Jesus, with no righteousness of our own to trust to, but finding all in Him. When William Carey was about to die, he ordered to have put upon his tombstone this verse: —

*"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Christ's kind arms I fall,
He is my strength, my righteousness,
My Jesus, and my all."*

I would like to wake up in eternity with such a verse as that in my mind, as I wish to go to sleep in this world with such a hope as that in my heart: —

*"Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to the cross I cling."*

Ah! I am talking about what some of us will know more of, perhaps, before this week is over. I am speaking now upon themes which you think are a long way off, but a moment may bring them near. A thousand years is a long time, but how soon it flies! One almost seems, in reading English history, to go back and shake hands with William the Conqueror; a few lives soon bring us even to the flood. You who are getting on to be forty years old, and especially you who are sixty or seventy, must feel how fast time flies. I only seem to preach a sermon one Sunday in time to get ready for the next. Time flies with such a whirl that no express train can overtake it, and even the lightning flash seems to lag behind it. We shall soon be at the great white throne; we shall soon be at the judgment bar of God. Oh! let us be making ready for it. Let us not live so much in this present, which is but a dream, an empty show, but let us live in the real, substantial future. Oh that I could reach some heart here tonight! I have a notion that I am speaking to some one here who will not have another warning. I am sure that with such throngs as crowd here Sabbath after Sabbath, I never preach to the same congregation twice. There are always some here who are dead between one Sunday and another. Out of such masses as these it must be so according to the ordinary computation. Who among you will it be who will die this week? Oh! ponder the question well! Who among you will dwell with the devouring flames? Who among you will abide with everlasting burnings? If I knew you I would fain bedew you with tears. If I knew you who are to die this week, I would fain come and kneel down at your side, and conjure you to think of eternal things. But I do not know you, and therefore by the living God I do implore you all to fly to Jesus by faith. These are no trifles, sirs, are they? If they be, I am but a sorry trifler, and you may go your ways and laugh at me; but if they be true and real, it becomes me to be in earnest, and much more does it become you to be in earnest.

“Prepare to meet thy God!” He cometh! Prepare now! “Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation!” The gates of mercy are not closed. Your sin is not unpardonable. You may yet find mercy. Christ invites you. His blood-drops cry to you —

*“Come and welcome,
Come and welcome, sinner come.”*

Oh! may the Holy Spirit put life into these poor words of mine, and may the Lord help you to come now. The way to come, you know, is just to trust in Christ. It is all done when you trust in Christ, throw yourselves right on him, having nothing else to trust to. See now, my whole weight leans on the front of this platform. Should this rail give way, I fall. Lean on Christ just in that way.

*“Venture on him, venture wholly,
Let no other trust intrude.”*

If you can get a grip of the cross, and stand there beneath the crimson canopy of the atonement, God himself cannot smite you, and the last tremendous day shall dawn upon you with splendour and delight, and not with gloom and terror.

I must send you away, but not until all believers present have given you an invitation to return to the Lord Jesus. To do this we will sing the following verses: —

*“Return, O wanderer, to thy home.
Thy Father calls for thee;
No longer now an exile roam
In guilt and misery;
Return, return.
Return, O wanderer, to thy home,*

*'Tis Jesus calls for thee:
The Spirit and the bride say, Come;
Oh now for refuge flee;
Return, return.
Return, O wanderer, to thy home,
'Tis madness to delay;
There are no pardons in the tomb,
And brief is mercy's day.
Return, return."*

REVELATION 21

FIFTY-NINE
A NEW CREATION

SERMON #3467

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 21:5

PUBLISHED IN 1915.

*He who sat upon the throne said, Behold I make
all things new."*

REVELATION 21:5

Men generally venerate antiquity. It were hard to say which has the stronger power over the human mind—antiquity or novelty. While men will frequently dote upon the old, they are most easily dazzled by the new. Anything new has at least one attraction. Restless spirits consider that the new must be better than the old. Though often disappointed, they are still ready to be caught by the same bait and, like the Athenians of Mars Hill, spend their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing. And as for ourselves, dear Friends, as we sometimes mournfully think of the flight of time, we are known

to cheerfully look out upon the new epochs as they begin to dawn upon us. If our calendar suggests some dismal memories in the past, our calculation predicts some happier prospects in the future! And it will sometimes happen that we leave so much anxiety, adversity and chastisement behind us, that it is a relief to hope that the tide has turned, and that a course of comfort, prosperity and mercy lies before us. One weeps over the past and the lost. I suppose the best of men must do so at times. I am sure those of us who are not the best, feel often constrained to pour out some such a lamentation as this—

“Much of our time has run to waste—
Our sins, how great the sum!
Lord, give us pardon for the past
And strength for days to come.”

I do not know but it is sometimes as well, when one has been plunged in sorrow, or feels ashamed of his past life—after having regretted that which is bygone and repented of it, and over it—to feel as if he breathed another atmosphere and had started on a fresh career. Having thrown away the old sword, he is now about to see what he can do with the new. Having put off an old garment, he is desirous to walk more worthily of his vocation with fresh ones that are provided for him. Perhaps the thought of freshness, the fact of new times having dawned on our path, may be a little help to those of us who are dull and heavy. And we may be stirred up to action, or, if not to action, it may awaken earnest hope that the infusion of a new start into our lives, new vigor instead of the old lethargy, new love instead of the old lukewarmness, new zeal instead of the old death-likeness—new, pertinacious, persevering industry for Christ instead of the old idleness, may result. God grant that it may be so!

Looking at the text in this light, I think it speaks to everyone

here present. Would you begin anew, lo, there is One who can help you to do so! From the Throne of God where sits the once Crucified but now Glorified Savior, there comes a whisper of hope to each and every soul who would be made new and would begin life anew. "Behold I make all things new." In trying to bring out the thoughts contained in this exclamation from the Throne—from the Emperor of the Universe, from the court of the King of Kings—we shall first speak, very briefly, of the new creation should bid you adore the great Regenerator. to behold with attention, the fact before you, with a view of receiving benefit from it. Observe the text speaks of—

1. A NEW CREATION.

"I make." That seems to reach the third stage, wherein the thrice holy God appears glorious in the highest degree! "I make all things new." This our Lord Jesus Christ has done upon the greatest scale! We must view His purpose. It is the purpose and intention of the Lord Jesus to make this world entirely new. You recollect how it was made at first—pure and perfect. It sang with its sister spheres the song of joy and reverence. It was a fair world, full of everything that was lovely, beautiful, happy, holy. And if we might be permitted to dream for a moment of what it would have been if it had continued as God created it, one might fancy what a blessed world it would be at this moment! Had it possessed a teeming population like its present one, and if, one by one, those godly ones had been caught away, like Elijah, without knowing death, to be succeeded by pious descendants—oh, what a blessed world it would have been! A world where every man would have been a priest and every house a temple, and every garment a vestment, and every meal a sacrifice, and every place holiness to the Lord, for the Tabernacle of God would have been among them and God, Himself,

would have dwelt among them! What songs would have hailed the rising of the sun—the birds of paradise caroling on every hill and in every dale their Maker's praise! What songs would have ushered in the stillness of the night! Yes, and angels, hovering over this fair world, would oft have heard the strain of joy breaking the silence of midnight, as glad and pure hearts beheld the eyes of the Creator beaming down upon them from the stars which stud the vault of Heaven!

But there came a serpent and his craft spoiled it all. He whispered into the ears of Mother Eve—she fell, and we fell with her—and what a world this now is! If a man walks about in it with his eyes open, he will see it to be a horrible sphere. I do not mean that its rivers, its lakes, its valleys, its mountains are repulsive. No, it is a world fit for angels, naturally, but it is a horrible world

morally! As I walked the other day down the streets of Paris and saw the soldiers with

their pretty dresses—and the knives and forks which they carried with them to carve men and make a meal for death—I could not help thinking this is a pretty world, this is. Only let one man lift his finger and a hundred thousand men are ready to meet a hundred thousand other men, all intent upon doing—what? Why, upon cutting each other's throats! Upon tearing out each other's bleeding hearts and wading up to their knees in each other's gore till the ditches are full of blood, horses and men all mingled, and left to be food for dogs and for carrion crows! And then the victors on either side in the fray, return, beat the drums and sound the trumpets and say, "Glory! Glory! Look what we have done!" Devils could not be worse than men when their passions are let loose. Dogs would scarcely tear each other as men do. Men of intellect sit down and put their fingers to their foreheads, racking their brains to find out new ways of using gunpowder, and shot, and shell—so as to be able to blow

twenty thousand souls into eternity as easily as 20 might be massacred by present appliances! And he is considered a clever man, a patriot, a benefactor of his own nation, who, by dint of genius, can discover some new way of destroying his fellow creatures. Oh, it is a horrible world, appalling to think of! When God looks at it, I wonder why He does not stamp it out, just as you and I do a spark of coal that flies upon our carpet from the fire! It is a dreadful world.

But Jesus Christ, who knew that we would never make this world much better, let us do what we would with it. He designed from the very first to make a new world of it. Truly, truly, this seems to me to be a glorious purpose! To make a world is something wonderful, but to make a world new is something more wonderful still! When God spoke and said, "Let there be light," it was a fiat which showed Him to be Divine. Yet there was nothing, then, to resist His will. He had no opponent—He could build as He pleased and there were none to pluck down. But when Jesus Christ comes to make a new world, there is everything opposed to Him. When He says, "Let there be light," Darkness says, "There shall not be light." When He says, "Let there be order," Chaos says, "No, I will maintain confusion." When He says, "Let there be holiness, let there be love, let there be truth," the principalities and powers of evil withstand Him and say, "There shall not be holiness, there shall be sin! There shall not be love, there shall be hate! There shall not be truth, there shall be error! There shall not be the worship of God, there shall be the worship of sticks and stones—men shall bow down before idols which their own hands have made!"

And yet, for all that, Jesus Christ, coming in the form of a Man, revealing Himself as the Son of God, determines to make all things new! And be assured, Brothers and Sisters, He will do it! Though He pleases to take His time and to use humble

instrumentalities to effect His purposes, yet do it He will! The day shall come when this world shall be as fair as it was at the primeval Sabbath. When there shall be a new Heaven and a new Earth, wherein shall dwell righteousness. The ancient prophecy shall be fulfilled to the letter! God shall dwell among men. Peace shall be domiciled on earth and Glory shall be ascribed to God in the highest! This great work of Christ, this grand design of making this old world into a new one shall be carried into effect!

In order to accomplish this, it has come to pass that Christ has made for us a New Covenant. The Old Covenant was, "Do this and live." That Covenant was a sentence of death upon us all. We could not do, therefore we could not live, and so we died. The New Covenant has nothing in it contingent upon creature-doing, but it bases all its provisions upon Christ having done the work! "I will, and you shall," this is the language of the New Covenant? The Covenant of Law, in which we were weak through the flesh, left us mangled and broken. The Covenant of Grace reveals God's kindness towards us and our part, thereof, has been fulfilled for us by our Surety, Christ Jesus. Thus it runs, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more forever; a new heart also will I give them, and a right spirit will I put within them." The old world is still under the old Covenant of Works and its children perish, for they cannot carry out the conditions of the Covenant—they cannot keep God's Law—they break it constantly, and they die. But the children of Grace are under the New Covenant of Grace, and through the precious blood, which is the penalty of the old broken Covenant, and through the spotless righteousness of Christ, which is the fulfillment and magnifying of the old Covenant, the Christian stands secure and rejoices that he is saved! Christ has thus made His people dwell under a New Covenant, instead of under the old one.

In addition to the New Covenant, Christ has been pleased to make us new men. His saints are “new creatures in Christ Jesus.” They have a new nature! God has breathed into them a new life. The Holy Spirit, though the old nature is still there, has been pleased to put within them a new nature. There is now a contending force within them—the old carnal nature inclining to evil and the new God-given nature panting after perfection. They are new men, “begotten again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” This new nature is moved by new principles. The old nature needed to be awed with threats, or bribed with rewards—the new nature feels the impulse of love! Gratitude is its mainspring—“We love Him because He first loved us.” No mercenary motive now stirs the new creature—

“My God, I love You not because
I hope for Heaven thereby,
Nor yet because who love You not
Must burn eternally.”

I love You, O my Savior, because on the Cross You did bear shame, and spitting, and manifold disgrace for me. New principles stir the new nature which God has given! And this new nature is conscious of new emotions. It loves what once it hated—it hates what once it loved. It finds blight where once it sought for bliss, and finds bliss where once it found nothing but bitterness. It leaps at the sound which was once dull to its ears—the name of a precious Christ! It rejoices in hopes which once seemed idle as dreams. It is filled with a Divine enthusiasm which it once rejected as fanatical! It is now conscious of living in a new element, breathing a fresh air, partaking of new food, drinking out of new wells not dug by men or filled from the earth. The man is new—new in principles and new in emotions!

And now the man is also new in relationship. He was an heir to wrath—he is now a child of God. He was a bondsman—he is now a free man. He was the Ishmael who dwelt in the wilderness—he is now the Isaac, and dwells with Sarah after the tenor of the New Covenant. He rejoices in Christ Jesus and feasts to the full! He was once the citizen of earth—he is now a citizen of Heaven. He once found his all beneath the clouds, but now his all is beyond the stars! He has new relationships. Christ is his Brother. God is his Father. The angels are his friends and the despised people of God are his best and nearest kinsfolk! And therefore the man has new aspirations. He now pants to glorify God! What cared he about the glory of God once? He now pants to see God—once he would have paid the fare, if it had cost his life, that he might escape from the Presence of the Lord! Now he hungers and thirsts after the living God. Yes, if his soul had wings, and he could break the fetters of this mortality, he would mount at once to dwell where Jesus is! Dear Friends, are you new men and women? If you are, you understand what it is. If you are not, I know I cannot explain it to you. Oh, to be born-again is a great mystery! Blessed is the soul that comprehends it! But he that knows it not will never learn it by the lips—he can only know it by the Spirit of God causing him to also be made a new creature in Christ Jesus.

Thus far I have said that the objective of Christ was to make a new world, and He began by making a New Covenant. Then, through His Spirit, He goes on to make new men under the New Covenant, and you will see that by this means He makes a new society. Swelling words have been spoken and great attempts taken in hand to renovate society, but you can never renovate society till you have renovated the individual members who compose society! You may build a brick house, if you please, but, build it as you like, it will be a house of brick upon whatever principles of architecture it may be

constructed! Not until that brick shall be transformed to marble can you hope to “dwell in marble halls.” So men may launch their divers theories and patent their social inventions, but after they have reshaped the society of sinners, it will still be a sinful society! It is otherwise with Christ. By making new men, He makes a new society, which society He calls His “Church.” That Church He sends into the world to act upon the rest of mankind. Verily, the day will come—whether it shall be at His Second Advent or before His Second Advent, I do not know—the day will come when, from the east to the west, and from the north to the south, there shall be a new world as far as men are concerned! There shall be no injustice towards the poor. There shall be no envying of the rich. There shall be no law to make men slaves. There shall be no power to oppress because there shall be no will to do it! Our Lord Jesus Christ shall put a new heart into earth’s kings and then He shall come Himself to take their thrones and their crowns, and to be, Himself, our Universal King, and in His day shall the righteous flourish!

Now I believe the way for us to regard that happy day in which He will make all things new—that happy day when the lion shall eat straw like the ox and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, when the sword shall be turned into the sickle, and the spear into the pruning hook—the way for us to regard that day, I think, is not standing with our mouths open expecting it, but by setting to work after the Master’s own fashion, seeking to bring it about! To gather out the elect from mankind, to illustrate the Gospel practically in our lives and so to do as Jesus did among the sons of men—promoting light, and peace, and truth, and holiness and happiness as God may help us!

I wish we had more time to enter fully into this part of the subject. We have not and, therefore, we must leave it, but may

you and I have a part in this new creation! Turning to our second point, I want you to—

II. ADORE THIS GREAT REGENERATOR.

He says, “Behold I make all things new.” Behold Him! He is a Man dressed in the common garments of the poor! He has no form nor comeliness and when you shall see Him there is no beauty in Him that you should desire Him. He has come to make the world new. He has no soldiery, no book of laws, no new philosophy. He has come to make the world new and to do this He has brought with Him—what? Why, Himself! He spends a life of weariness and sorrow among those who despise Him—and if you want to know first and foremost how He makes all things new, you must see Him sweating great drops of blood in the Garden—that is the blood of the new world which He is pouring forth! You must see Him bound, scourged, spat upon, led to the accursed tree! While God’s wrath for sin is yet unspent, the world cannot be new, but when that wrath on account of sin is all poured upon the head of the great Substitute, then the world stands in a new relation to God and it can be a new world! See the Savior, then, in groans and pangs which cannot be described, bearing the curse of God, for He made Him to be sin for us, though He knew no sin. The curse fell on Him, as it is written, “Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree.” It pleased the Father to bruise Him. He has put Him to grief. He has made His soul to be an offering for sin.” That dolorous pain, then, of the Master, was the world’s new-making! It was then and there that the world was born-again. No mother’s pangs, when she brought forth a man-child, were such as those of Christ when He brought forth the new creation! It was there in the travail of His soul—did you ever catch that idea, “the travail of His soul”?—it was there that the

new world was born! "Behold I make all things new" is a mysterious voice from the broken heart of a dying Savior! From the empty tomb, as He rises, I hear it come in silvery notes, "Behold I make all things new." You must trace the birth of the New Creation up to the grave of our Lord Jesus Christ, to the place where the Cross stood and where His body lay.

But the actual operations of new-making the world takes place through the truth which Christ promulgated. After the relation of the world to God had been changed by the sufferings of Jesus, the world's thought concerning God came to be changed by the preaching of Jesus. He came and revealed God to man as man had never before seen God. It was through Him we learned that "God is Love." It was through Him that we understood that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." It is the preaching of the Cross of Jesus that is to make the world new! It is not the philosophies of men, but the Wisdom of God which effects the change! In the Presence of Christ your philosophies must sink into darkness as stars in the presence of the sun!

And it is also by the giving of the Holy Spirit, as the result of the Ascension of Christ on high, that the world is made new. Thus He gives power to the ministry. There were 3,000 new creations in one day when Peter preached the Gospel under the influence of the Holy Spirit! And that blessed Spirit of God is here tonight! Oh, I would that there might be some new creations tonight—that that Divine heavenly Spirit would come into some of your souls and drop there that vital spark of heavenly flame which shall never be quenched, but shall burn brightly in Heaven forever! Wherever the Gospel is preached, the Spirit is present in that Gospel, and He gives faith to men, gives life to men, and so they are made new and the new-making thus goes on! I have not time—though thoughts crowd

into my mind—to speak about the way in which Christ thus new-makes the world. It is quite certain that three parts of His history are connected with it. I have only referred to His death, His burial and His Resurrection, but I might go on to speak of His constant and prevalent intercessions, for His pleading before the Throne of God is also a part of the mighty operation! Nor can I doubt but that His Second Advent will be the bringing out of the top stone with shouts of, “Grace, Grace unto it!” Then shall be fulfilled—finally and exhaustively fulfilled—the saying that is written, “Behold I make all things new.” The text begins with, “Behold!” and I am going to close with that same note of admiration. I want you to—

III. BEHOLD AND TO BELIEVE.

Behold the Lord Jesus is now enthroned in Heaven! He it is who makes all things new. Is not this what some of you here present deeply need? If you look within yourselves, you will see much to disgust and alarm you. Perhaps you dare not take stock of yourselves—you dare not consider where you are, nor what you are, nor where you are bound. “To speak candidly,” you say, “I need reforming.” Very likely, but you need a great deal more than mere reformation! I have heard of a being who habitually used to swear, “God mend me!” Somebody said, “Better make a new one.” That is the case with full many of you. You are saying, “Well, I will turn over a new leaf.” You had better shut the book up, altogether, and never turn over any more leaves, for all the pages are alike bad! “Oh, well,” says one, “I shall try if I cannot alter.” I wish you would try God’s altering of you, instead of altering yourselves. “Well, but surely, surely, I may wash and be clean! I will try to make myself as clean as possible!” Yes, yes, that is all very well—but what if you have a corpse in the house? I would have you make it clean, yet that

will not make it live! However much you may wash it, it is still corrupt. You may reform yourselves as much as ever you please—all your reformation will be futile—you need more, a great deal more than that! The fact is, you must be made new! Nothing less will do! You must be made new! You must be born-again!

“Ah!” says one, “if I could be made new, there might be a chance for me.” Well now, Christ looks down from His Throne in Heaven and He says, “Behold I will make all things new.” “Yes,” you say, “but He will not make me new.” Why not? Does He not say, “I make all things new”? “But my heart is as hard as a rock,” you say. Well, but He says, “I will make all things new,” so He can give you a new heart! “Oh, but I am so very stubborn.” Yes, yes, but He makes all things new, and He can make you as tender and sensitive as a little child! Oftentimes a gray-headed sinner has looked back to his childhood and remembered the time when he used to sing his little hymn at his mother’s knee—and he has said, “Ah! I have been in many strange places since then, and my heart has got seared and hard! I wish I could get back to what I was then!” Well, you can, you can! Christ can bring you there! No, He can bring you to something better than you ever were when those golden ringlets hung so plentifully about that pretty little head of yours, for you were not so innocent, then, as you now think you were! Christ can make you really pure in heart. He can make you a new creature, so that you shall be converted and become as a little child. “Oh,” you say, “how can I get it? How can I prepare myself for Him?” You do not need to prepare yourself for Him! Go to Him just as you are—trust Him to do it and He will do it! That is faith, you know—trust, dependence. Can you believe that Christ can save you? Oh, can you believe that? Well now, will you try Him to save you? Will you trust Him to deliver you from your drunkenness, from your angry temper,

your pride, your love of self, your lusts? Do you desire to be a new creature in Christ Jesus? If so, that very desire must have come from Heaven! I hope that He has already begun the good work in you and He that begins it will carry it on. Do not be afraid, however bad your character, or however vicious your disposition. "Behold," says Christ, "I make all things new."

What a wonder it is that a man should ever hate a new heart! You know if a lobster loses its claw in a fight, it can grow a new claw—and that is thought to be very marvelous. It would be very wonderful if men would be able to grow new arms and new legs, but who ever heard of a creature who grew a new heart? You may have seen a branch lopped off a tree, and you may have thought that, perhaps, the tree will sprout again, and there will be a new limb, but who ever heard of old trees getting new sap and a new core? But my Lord and Master, the Crucified and exalted Savior, has given new hearts and new cores! He has put the vital substance into men afresh and made new creatures of them! I am glad to notice the tears in your eyes when you think on the past—but wipe them away, now, and look up to the Cross and say—

Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Your blood was shed for me,
And that You bid me come to Thee,
O Lamb, O God, I come."

"Oh, make me a new creature!" If you have said that from your heart, you are a new creature, dear Brother or Sister, and we will rejoice together in this regenerating Savior!

Let me just say a few words to those of you who love the Lord. You may have some very bad children, or you may have some relatives who are going on in sin from bad to worse. I earnestly recommend you attentively consider my text.

“Behold,” says Christ, “I make all things new.” “No, no,” says the old father, “I used to pray for my boy. He broke my heart. He brought his mother’s gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. But he has gone away and I have not heard from him for years—and I am almost afraid to wish I ever hear from him again—for did seemed so reckless that my only comfort is in trying to forget him.” “Yes,” says a husband here, “I have prayed for my wife so many times that I feel tempted to give it up—it is not likely that I shall ever live to see her saved.” Oh, but, Brothers and Sisters, we do not know! Since the Lord saved us, there cannot be any limits as to what He can do! Look at the text, “Behold I make all things new.” I will pray, “Lord, make my children new.” You shall pray, “Lord, make my wife new.” You godly wives who have ungodly husbands, you shall pray, “Lord, make our husbands new.” You who have dear friends who lie upon your bosom, as you anxiously think of them, pray the Lord Jesus to make them new! When our friends are made new, ah, what a great comfort they are—just as much so as they formerly were a sorrow. The greater the sinner, the greater the joy to loving Believers when they see him saved! “Behold,” says Christ—I do like that word—“Behold it! Stand and look at it! See how I took the man when he was up to his neck in sin and made him preach the Gospel! Can I not do the same again? Look there and see the dying thief upon the cross, black with a thousand crimes—I washed him and took him to Paradise the same day! What can I not do? Behold I make all things new.”

Courage, my Brothers and Sisters. We will not entertain any more doubt about Christ’s power to save! Rather, by God’s Grace, may we henceforth believe more in Him and, according, to our faith, so shall it be done unto us. If we can only trust Him for those of our friends whose faults seem to us few and light, our little trust will reap little reward. But if we can go with strong faith in a great God, and bring great sinners in our

arms and put them down before this mighty Regenerator of men and say, “Lord, if You will, You can make them new”—and if we will never cease the pleading till we get the blessing, then we shall see ever-accumulating illustrations of the fact that Jesus makes all things new—and calling up the witnesses of His redeeming power, we shall cry in the ears of a drowsy Church and an incredulous world, “Behold, behold, behold! He makes all things new.” The Lord give us to see it!

Amen.

SIXTY
SERMON FOR NEW YEAR'S-DAY

SERMON GIVEN ON JANUARY 1, 1885

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 21:5

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 31

*“And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I
make all things new.”*

REVELATION 21:5

How pleased we are with that which is new! Our children's eyes sparkle when we talk of giving them a toy or a book which is called new; for our short-lived human nature loves that which has lately come, and is therefore like our own fleeting selves. In this respect, we are all children, for we eagerly demand the news of the day, and are all too apt to rush after the “many inventions” of the hour. The Athenians, who spent their time in telling and hearing some new thing, were by no means

singular persons: novelty still fascinates the crowd. As the world's poet says—

“All with one consent praise new-born gawds.”

I should not wonder, therefore, if the mere words of my text should sound like a pleasant song in your ears; but I am thankful that their deeper meaning is even more joyful. The newness which Jesus brings is bright, clear, heavenly, enduring. We are at this moment specially ready for a new year. The most of men have grown weary with the old cry of depression of trade and hard times; we are glad to escape from what has been to many a twelve-months of great trial. The last year had become wheezy, croaking, and decrepit, in its old age; and we lay it asleep with a psalm of judgment and mercy. We hope that this newborn year will not be worse than its predecessor, and we pray that it may be a great deal better. At any rate, it is new, and we are encouraged to couple with it the idea of happiness, as we say one to another, “I wish you a happy New Year.”

*“Ring out the old, ring in the new;
Ring, happy bells, across the snow;
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.”*

We ought not, as men in Christ Jesus, to be carried away by a childish love of novelty, for we worship a God who is ever the same, and of whose years there is no end. In some matters “the old is better.” There are certain things which are already so truly new, that to change them for anything else would be to lose old gold for new dross. The old, old gospel is the newest thing in the world; in its very essence it is for ever good news. In the things of God the old is ever new, and if any man brings forward that which seems to be new doctrine and new truth, it is soon perceived that the new dogma is only worn-out heresy

dexterously repaired, and the discovery in theology is the digging up of a carcase of error which had better have been left to rot in oblivion. In the great matter of truth and godliness, we may safely say, "There is nothing new under the sun."

Yet, as I have already said, there has been so much evil about ourselves and our old nature, so much sin about our life and the old past, so much mischief about our surroundings and the old temptations, that we are not distressed by the belief that old things are passing away. Hope springs up at the first sound of such words as these from the lips of our risen and reigning Lord: "Behold, I make all things new." It is fit that things so outworn and defiled should be laid aside, and better things fill their places.

This is the first day of a new year, and therefore a solemnly joyous day. Though there is no real difference between it and any other day, yet in our mind and thought it is a marked period, which we regard as one of the milestones set up on the highway of our life. It is only in imagination that there is any close of one year and beginning of another; and yet it has most fitly all the force of a great fact. When men "cross the line," they find no visible mark: the sea bears no trace of an equatorial belt; and yet mariners know whereabouts they are, and they take notice thereof, so that a man can hardly cross the line for the first time without remembering it to the day of his death. We are crossing the line now. We have sailed into the year of grace 1885; therefore, let us keep a feast unto the Lord. If Jesus has not made us new already, let the new year cause us to think about the great and needful change of conversion; and if our Lord has begun to make us new, and we have somewhat entered into the new world wherein dwelleth righteousness, let us be persuaded by the season to press forward into the centre of his new creation, that we may feel to the full all the power of his grace.

The words he speaks us to-night are truly divine. Listen, — “Behold, I make.” Who is the great I? Who but the eternal Son of God? “Behold, I make.” Who can make but God, the Maker of heaven and earth? It is his high prerogative to make and to destroy. “Behold, I make all things.” What a range of creating power is here! Nothing stands outside of that all-surrounding circle. “Behold, I make ail things new” What a splendour of almighty goodness shines out upon our souls! Lord, let us enter into this new universe of thine. Let us be new-created with the “all things.” In us also may men behold the marvels of thy renewing love.

Let us now, at the portal of the new year, sing a hymn to Jesus, as we hear these encouraging words which he speaks from his throne. O Lord, we would rejoice and be glad for ever in that which thou dost create. The former troubles are forgotten, and are hid from our eyes because of thine ancient promise, — “Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.” (Isaiah lxv. 17).

I am going to talk to-night for a little upon the great transformation spoken of in the text, “I make all things new;” and then upon the earnest call in the text to consider that transformation: “He that sat upon the throne said, ‘Behold’: attend, consider, look to it!” “Behold, I make all things new.” Oh for a bedewing of the Holy Spirit while entering upon this theme! I would that our fleece might now be so wet as never to become dry throughout the whole year. Oh for a horn of oil to be poured on the head of the young year, anointing it for the constant service of the Lord!

I. Briefly, then, here is one of the grandest truths that ever fell even from the lips of Jesus:— “Behold, I make all things new.” Let us gaze upon THE GREAT TRANSFORMATION.

This renewing work has been in our Lord's hands from of old. We were under the old covenant, and our first father and federal head, Adam, had broken that covenant, and we were ruined by his fatal breach. The substance of the old covenant was on this wise,—“If thou wilt keep my command thou shalt live, and thy posterity shall live, but if thou shalt eat of the tree which I have forbidden thee, dying, thou shalt die, and all thy posterity in thee.” This is where we were found, broken in pieces, sore wounded, and even slain by the tremendous fall which destroyed both our Paradise and ourselves. We died in Adam as to spiritual life, and our death revealed itself in an inward tendency to evil which reigned in our members. We were like Ezekiel's deserted infant unswaddled and unwashed, left in our pollution to die; but the Son of God passed by and saw us in the greatness of our ruin. In his wondrous love our Lord Jesus put us under a new covenant, a covenant of which he became the second Adam, a covenant which ran on this wise,—“If thou shalt render perfect obedience and vindicate my justice, then those who are in thee shall not perish, but they shall live because thou livest.” Now, our Lord Jesus, our Surety and Covenant Head, has fulfilled his portion of the covenant engagement, and the compact stands as a bond of pure promise without condition or risk. Those who are participants in that covenant cannot invalidate it, for it never did depend upon them, but only upon him who was and is their federal head and representative before God. Of Jesus the demand was made and he met it. By him man's side of the covenant was undertaken and fulfilled, and now no condition remains; it is solely made up of promises which are unconditional and sure to all the seed. To-day believers are not under the covenant of “If thou doest this thou shalt live,” but under that new covenant which says, “Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” It is not now “Do and live,” but “Live and do;” we think not of

merit and reward, but of free grace producing holy practice as the result of gratitude. What law could not do, grace has accomplished.

We ought never to forget this bottom of everything, this making of all things new by the fashioning of a new covenant, so that we have come out from under the bondage of the law and the ruin of the fall, and we have entered upon the liberty of Christ, into acceptance with God, and into the boundless joy of being saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation, so that we “shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.” You young people, as soon as ever you know the Lord, I exhort you to study well that word “covenant.” It is a key-word opening the treasures of revelation. He that rightly understands the difference between the two covenants has the foundation of sound theology laid in his mind. This is the clue of many a maze, the open sesame of many a mystery. “I make all things new,” begins with the bringing in of a better hope by virtue of a better covenant.

The foundation being made new, the Lord Jesus Christ has set before us a new way of life, which grows out of that covenant. The old way of life was, “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.” There they are, perfect, and holy, and just, and good; but, alas, dear friends, you and I have broken the commandments. We dare not say that we have kept the ten commands from our youth up; on the contrary, we are compelled by our consciences to confess that in spirit and in heart, if not in act, we have continually broken the law of God; and we are therefore under sin and condemnation, and there is no hope for us by the works of the law. For this reason the gospel sets before us another way, and says, “It is of faith, that it might be by grace.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” Hence we read of being “justified by faith,” and being made acceptable to God by faith. To be “justified” means

being made really just: though we were guilty in ourselves we are regarded as just by virtue of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for us. Thus we fell into condemnation through another, and we rise into justification through another. It is written, "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities"; and this scripture is fulfilled in all those who believe in the Lord Jesus unto eternal life. Our path to eternal glory is the road of faith,— "The just shall live by faith." We are "accepted in the Beloved" when we believe in him whom God has set forth to be our righteousness. "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight"; but we are "justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

What a blessing it is for you and for me that Jesus has made all things new in that respect! I am glad that I have not to stand here and say, "My dear hearers, do this and do that, and you will be saved": because you would not do as you were commanded; for your nature is weak and wicked. But I have to bid you—

*"Lay your deadly doing down, down at Jesus'
feet;
Stand in him, in him alone, gloriously
complete."*

I trust you will accept this most gracious and suitable way of salvation. It is most glorious to God and safe to you: do not neglect so great salvation. After you have believed unto life you will go and do all manner of holy deeds as the result of your new life; but do not attempt them with the view of earning life. Prompted no longer by the servile and selfish motive of saving yourself, but by gratitude for the fact that you are saved, you will rise to virtue and true holiness. Faith has brought us into

the possession of an indefeasible salvation; and now for the love we bear our Saviour, we must obey him and become “zealous for good works.”

By grace every believer is brought into a new relationship with God. Let us rejoice in this: “Thou art no more a servant but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.” Oh you who are now children, you were servants a little while ago! Some of you, my hearers, are servants now, and as servants I would bid you expect your wages. Alas, your service has been no service, but a rebellion; and if you get no more wages than you deserve you will be cast away for ever. You ought to be thankful to God that he has not yet recompensed you— that he has not dealt with you after your sins, nor rewarded you according to your iniquities. Do you not also know, you servants, what is likely to happen to you as servants? What do you yourself do with a bad servant? You say to him, “There are your wages: go.” “A servant abideth not in the house for ever.” Yon, too, will be driven out of your religious profession and your period of probation, and where will you go? The wilderness of destruction lies before you. Oh that you may not be left to wander with Ishmael, the son of the bondwoman!

“Behold, I make all things new,” says Jesus, and then he makes his people into sons. When we are made sons do we work for wages? We have no desire for any present payment, for our Father says to us, “Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine and, moreover, we have the inheritance in reversion, entailed by the covenant. We cannot demand the servile wage because we have already all that our Father possesses. He has given us himself and his all-sufficiency for our everlasting portion; what more can we desire? He will never drive us from his house. Never has our great Father disowned one of his sons. It cannot be; his loving heart is too much bound up in his own adopted ones. That near and dear

relationship which is manifested in adoption and regeneration, binds the child of God to the great Father's heart in such a way that he will never cast him off, nor suffer him to perish. I rejoice in the fact that we are no longer bond-slaves but sons. "Behold," says Christ, "I make all things new."

There has also been wrought in us by the work of the Holy Spirit a new life, with all the new feelings, and new desires, and new works which go therewith. The tree is made new, and the fruits are new in consequence. That same Spirit of God who taught us that we were ruined in our old estate, led us gently by the hand till we came to the New Covenant promise and looked to Jesus, and saw in him the full atonement for sin. Happy discovery for us; it was the kindling of new life in us. From the moment that we trusted in Jesus, a new life darted into our spirit. I am not going to say which is first, the new birth, or faith, or repentance. Nobody can tell which spoke of a wheel moves first; it moves as a whole. The moment the divine life comes into the heart we believe: the moment we believe the eternal life is there. We repent because we believe, and believe while we repent. The life that we live in the flesh is no longer according to the lusts of the world, but we live by faith in the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us. Our spiritual life is a new-born thing, the creation of the Spirit of life. We have, of course, that natural life which is sustained by food, and evidenced by our breath; but there is another life within which is not seen of men, nor fed by the provisions of earth. We are conscious of having been quickened, for we were dead once, and we know it; but now we have passed from death into life, and we know it quite as certainly. A new and higher motive sways us now; for we seek not self but God. Another hand grasps the tiller and steers our ship in a new course. New desires are felt to which we were strangers in our former state. New fears are mighty within us, — holy fears which once we

should have ridiculed. New hopes are in us, bright and sure, such as we did not even desire to know when we lived a mere carnal life. We are not what we were: we are new, and have begun a new career. We are not what we shall be, but assuredly we are not what we used to be. As for myself, my consciousness of being a new man in Christ Jesus is often as sharp and crisp as my consciousness of being in existence. I know I am not only and solely what I was by my first birth; I feel within myself another life— a second and a higher vitality which has often to contend with my lower self, and by that very contention makes me conscious of its existence. This new principle is, from day to day, gathering strength, and winning the victory. It has its hand upon the throat of the old sinful nature, and it shall eventually trample it like dust beneath its feet. I feel this within me: do not you? [A loud voice, “Ay! ay!”] Since you feel this, I know you can say to-night that Jesus Christ, who sits on the throne, makes all things new. Blessed be his name. [Several voices, “Amen.”] It needed the Lord himself to make such as we are new. None but a Saviour on the throne could accomplish it; and therefore let him have the glory of it.

I believe that Jesus Christ has in some of you not only made you new, but made everything new to you. “Ah,” said one, when she was converted, “either the world is greatly altered, or else I am.” Why, either you and I are turned upside down in nature, or the world is. We used to think it a wise world once, but how foolish we think it now! We used to think it a brave gay world that showed us real happiness, but we are no longer deceived, we have seen Madame Bubble’s painted face in its true deformity. “The world is crucified unto me,” said Paul; and many of you can say the same. It is like a gibbeted criminal hung up to die. Meanwhile, there is no love lost, for the world thinks much the same of us, and therein we can sympathize with Paul when he said, “I am crucified unto the world.” What

a transformation grace makes in all things within our little world! In our heart there is a new heaven and a new earth. What a change in our joys! Ah, we blush to think what our joys used to be; but they are heavenly now. We are equally ashamed of our hates and our prejudices: but these have vanished once for all. Why, now we love the very things we once despised, and our heart flies as with wings after that which once it detested. What a different Bible we have now! Blessed book; it is just the same, but oh, how differently do we read it. The mercy-seat, what a different place it is now! Our wretched, formal prayers, if we did offer them — what a mockery they were! But now we draw near to God and speak with our Father with delight. We have access to him by the new and living way. The house of God, how different it is from what it used to be! We love to be found within its walls, and we feel delighted to join in the praises of the Lord. I do not know that I admire brethren for calling out in the service as our friends did just now; but I certainly do not blame them. A person shook hands with me one day this week who does not often hear me preach, and he expressed to me his unbounded delight in listening to the doctrine of the grace of God, and he added, “Surely your people must be made of stone.” “Why?” said I. “Why!” he replied, “if they were not they would all get up and shout ‘Hallelujah’ when you are preaching such a glorious gospel. I wanted to shout badly on Sunday morning; but as everybody else was quiet, I held my tongue.” For which I thought he was a wise man: but yet I do not wonder if men who have tasted of the grace of God, and feel that the Lord has done great things for them, whereof they are glad, do feel like crying out for joy. Let us have a little indulgence to-night. Now, you that feel that you must cry aloud for joy, join with me and cry “Hallelujah.” [A great number of voices cried, “Hallelujah!”] Hallelujah, glory be to our Redeemer’s name. Why should we not lift up

our voices in his praise? We will. He has put a new song into our mouths, and we must sing it. The mountains and the hills break forth before us into singing, and we cannot be dumb. Praise is our ever new delight; let us baptize the new year into a sea of it. In praise we will vie with angels and archangels, for they are not so indebted to grace as we are.

*“Never did angels taste above
Redeeming grace and dying love.”*

But we have tasted these precious things, and unto God we will lift up our loudest song for ever.

The process which we have roughly described as taking place in ourselves is in other forms going on in the world. The whole creation is travailing, all time is groaning, providence is working, grace is striving, and all for one end,— the bringing forth of the new and better age. It is coming. It is coming. Not in vain did John write, “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.” What a prospect does all this open up to the believer! Our future is glorious; let not our present be gloomy.

II. But now, in the text there is AN EARNEST CALL for

us to consider this work of our Lord. He that sitteth on the throne saith, "Behold, I make all things new." Why should he call upon us to behold it? All his works deserve study: "The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein." Whatsoever the Lord doeth is full of wisdom, and the wise will search into it. But when the Lord himself sets up a light, and calls us to pause, and look, we cannot help beholding.

I think that the Lord Jesus Christ especially calls us to consider this, that we may, according to our condition, derive profit from it.

First, if the Lord Jesus makes all things new, then a new birth is possible to you, dear friend, though you have come here to-night in a wrong state of heart, with your sins upon you, binding you fast. There is enough of light in your soul for you to know that you are in darkness; and you are saying to yourself, "Oh, that I could reach to better things! I hear how these people of God cry 'Hallelujah!' at what Christ has done for them. Can he do the same for me?" Listen! He that sitteth on the throne says in infinite condescension to you upon the dunghill, "Behold, I make all things new." There is nothing so old that he cannot make it new — nothing so fixed and habitual that he cannot change it. Dost thou not know, dear heart, that the Spirit of God has regenerated men and women quite as far gone as thou art? They have been as deeply sunken in sin, and as hardened by habit as ever thou canst be, and they thought themselves given up to despair, as thou thinkest thyself to be; yet the Spirit of God carried out the will of the Lord Christ, and made them new. Why should he not make thee new? Let every thief know that the dying thief entered heaven by faith in Jesus. Let every one that has been a great transgressor remember how Manasseh received a new heart, and repented of his evil deeds. Let every one who has left the paths of purity

remember how the woman that was a sinner loved much, because much had been forgiven her. I cannot doubt of the possibility of your salvation, my dear friend, whenever I think of my own. A more determined, obstinate rebel than I could scarce have been. Child as I was, and under holy restraint as I was, so as to be kept from gross outward sin, I had a powerful inner nature which would not brook control. I strove hard and kicked against the pricks. I laboured to win heaven by self-righteousness, and this is as real a rebellion as open sin. But, oh, the grace of God, how it can tame us! How it can turn us! With no bit or bridle, but with a blessed suavity of tenderness, it turns us according to its pleasure. O anxious one, it can turn you! I want, then, to drop into your ear — and may the Spirit of God drop into your heart— this word, you may be born again. The Lord can work a radical change in you. He that sitteth on the throne can do for you what you cannot do for yourself; and, as he made you once, and you became marred by sin, he can new make you; for he saith, “Behold, I make all things new.”

Furthermore, you will say to me, “I desire to lead a new life.” To do this you must be new yourself; for as the man is, so his life will be. If you leave the fountain foul the streams cannot be pure. Renewal must begin with the heart. Dear friend, the Lord Jesus Christ is able to make your life entirely new. We have seen many transformed into new parents and new children. Friends have said in wonder, “What a change in John! What an alteration in Ellen!” We have seen men become new husbands, and women become new wives. They are the same persons, and yet not the same. Grace works a very deep, striking, and lasting change. Ask those that have had to live with converted people whether the transformation has not been marvellous. Christ makes new servants, new masters, new friends, new brothers, new sisters. The Lord can so change us that we shall scarcely know ourselves: I mean he can thus

change you who now despair of yourselves. O dear hearts, there is no absolute necessity that you should always go downward in evil till you descend to hell. There is a hand that can give you a gravitation in the opposite direction. It would be a wonderful thing if Niagara when it is in its full descent should be made to leap upwards, and the St. Lawrence and the sea should begin to climb backward to the lakes. Yet God could do even that; and so he can reverse the course of your fallen nature, and make you act as a new man. He can stay the tide of your raging passion; he can make you, who were like a devil, become as an angel of God; for thus he speaks from the throne of his eternal majesty, "Behold, I make all things new." Come and lay yourself down at his feet, and ask him to make you new. I beseech you, do this at once!

"Well, I am going to mend myself," says one: "I have taken the pledge, and I am going to be honest, and chaste, and religious." This is commendable resolving, but what will come of it? You will break your resolutions, and be nothing bettered by your attempts at reform. I expect that if you go into the business of mending yourself, you will be like the man who had an old gun, and took it to the gunsmith, and the gunsmith said, "Well, this would make a very good gun if it had a new stock, and a new lock, and a new barrel." So you would make a very good man by mending, if you had a new heart, and new life, and were made new all over, so that there was not a bit of the old stuff left. It will be easier, a great deal, depend upon it, even for God to make you new, than to mend you; for the fact is that "the carnal mind is enmity against God," and is not reconciled to God, neither, indeed, can be; so that mending will not answer; you must be made anew. "Ye must be born again." What is wanted is that you should be made a new creature in Christ Jesus. You must be dead and buried with Christ, and risen again in him; and then all will be well, for he will have

made all things new. I pray God to bless these feeble words of mine for the helping of some of his chosen out of the darkness of their fears.

But now, beloved, farther than this. There are children of God who need this text, "Behold, I make all things new," whose sigh is that they so soon grow dull and weary in the ways of God, and therefore they need daily renewing. A brother said to me some time ago, "Dear sir, I frequently grow very sleepy in my walk with God. I seem to lose the freshness of it; and especially by about Saturday I get I hardly know where; but," he added, "as for you, whenever I hear you, you seem to be all alive and full of fresh energy." "Ah, my dear brother," I said, "that is because you do not know much about me." That was all I was able to say just then. I thank God for keeping me near himself; but I am as weak, and stale, and unprofitable as any of you. I say this with very great shame— shame for myself, and shame for the brother who led me to make the confession. We are both wrong. With all our fresh springs in God, we ought to be always full of new life. Our love to Christ ought to be every minute as if it were new-born. Our zeal for God ought to be as fresh as if we had just begun to delight in him. "Ay, but it is not," says one; and I am sorry I cannot contradict him. After a few months a vigorous young Christian will begin to cool down; and those who have been long in the ways of God find that final perseverance must be a miracle if ever it is to be accomplished, for naturally the tire and faint.

Well, now, dear friends, why do you and I ever get stale and flat? Why do we sing,

"Dear Lord, and shall we ever live

At this poor dying rate?"

Why do we have to cry—

"In vain we tune our formal songs,

*In vain we strive to rise;
Hosannas languish on our tongues,
And our devotion dies"?*

Why, it is because we get away from him who says, "Behold, I make all things new." The straight way to a perpetual newness and freshness of holy youth is to go to Christ again, just as we did at the first.

A better thing still is never to leave him, but to stand for ever at the cross -foot delighting yourself in his all-sufficient sacrifice. They that are full of the joy of the Lord never find life grow weary. They that walk in the light of his countenance can say of the Lord Jesus, "Thou hast the dew of thy youth"; and that dew falls upon those who dwell with him. Oh, I am sure that if we kept up perpetual communion with him, we should keep up a perpetual stream of delights.

*"Immortal joys come streaming down,
Joys, like his griefs, immense, unknown;"*

but these joys only come from him. We shall be young if we keep with the ever young and fresh Beloved, whose locks are bushy and black as a raven. He saith, and he performs the saying, "Behold, I make all things new."

He can make that next sermon of yours, my dear brother minister, quite new and interesting. He can make that prayer-meeting no longer a dreary affair, but quite a new thing to you and all the people. My dear sister, next time you go to your class, you may feel as if you had only just begun teaching. You will not be at all tired of your godly work, but love it better than ever. And you, my dear brother, at the corner of the street where you are often interrupted, perhaps, with foul language, you will feel that you are pleased with your position of self-

denial. Getting near to Christ, you will partake in his joy, and that joy shall be your strength, your freshness, the newness of your life. God grant us to drink of the eternal fountains, that we may for ever overflow.

And, further, dear friends, there may be some dear child of God here who is conscious that he lives on a very low platform of spiritual life, and he knows that the Lord can raise him to a new condition. Numbers of Christians seem to live in the marshes always. If you go through the valleys of Switzerland, you will find yourself get feverish and heavy in spirit, and you will see many idiots, persons with the goitre, and people greatly afflicted. Climb the sides of the hills, ascend into the Alps, and you will not meet with that kind of thing in the pure fresh air. Many Christians are of the sickly-valley breed. Oh that they could get up to the high mountains, and be strong!

I want to say to such, if you have been all your lifetime in bondage, you need not remain there any longer; for there is in Jesus the power to make all things new, and to lift you into new delights. It will seem to be a dead lift to you; but it is within the power of that pierced hand to lift you right out of doubt, and fear, and despondency, and spiritual lethargy, and weakness, and just to make you now, from this day forward, “strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.”

Now breathe a silent prayer, dear brother, dear sister, to him who makes all things new. “Lord, make thy poor, spiritually sick child to be strong in spiritual health.” Oh, what a blessing it would be for some workers if God would make them strong! All the church would be the better because of the way in which the Lord would help them to do their work. Why should some of you be living at a penny a day and starving yourselves, when your Father would give you to live like princes of the blood royal if you would but trust him? I am persuaded that the most of us are beggars when we might be

millionaires in spiritual things. And here is our strength for rising to a nobler state of mind, "Behold I make all things new."

Another application of this truth will be this:— "Oh," says one, "I do not know what to make of myself. I have had a wary time of late. Everything seems to have gone wrong with me. My family cause me great anxiety. My business is a thorny maze. My own health is precarious. I dread this year. In fact, I dread everything." We will not go on with that lamentation, but we will bear the cheering word,— "Behold, I make all things new." The Lord, in answer to believing prayer, and especially in answer to a full resignation to his will, is able to make all providential surroundings new for you. I have known the Lord on a sudden to turn darkness into light, and take away the sackcloth and the ashes from his dear children, for "he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." Sometimes all this worry is mere discontent; and when the child of God gets right himself these imaginary troubles vanish like the mist of the morning; but when they are real troubles, God can as easily change your condition, dear child of God, as he can turn his hand. He can make your harsh and ungodly husband to become gentle and gracious. He can bring your children to bow at the family altar, and to rejoice with you in Christ. He can cause your business to prosper; or, if he does not do that, he can strengthen your back to bear the burden of your daily cross. Oh, it is wonderful how different a thing becomes when it is taken to God. But you want to make it all new yourself; and you fret and you worry, and you tease, and you trouble, and you make a burden of yourself. Why not leave that off, and in humble prayer take the matter to the Lord, and say, "Lord, appear for me, for thou hast said, 'I make all things new.' Make my circumstances new"? He is certainly able to turn your captivity as he turns the sun when it has reached the southern tropic.

Come, there is one more application, and that is that the Lord can convert those dear friends about whose souls you have been so anxious. The Lord who makes all things new can hear your prayers. One of the first prayers that I heard to-night in the prayer-meeting was by a dear brother that God would save his relatives. Then another with great tenderness prayed for his children. I knew it came from an aching heart. Some of you have heart-breakers at home: the Lord break their hearts. You have grievous trouble because you hear the dearest that you have blaspheming the God you love. You know that they are Sabbath-breakers, and utterly godless, and you tremble for their eternal fate. Certain persons attend this Tabernacle—I do not see them to-night—but I can say of them that I never enter this pulpit without looking to their pews to see whether they are there, and breathing my heart to God for them. I forget a great many of you who are saved; but I always pray for them. And they will be brought in, I feel assured; but, oh, that it may be this year! I liked what a brother said at the church-meeting on Monday night, when his brother was introduced to the church. (Ah, there he sits.) I asked about his brother's conversion, and I said, "I suppose you were surprised to see him converted." He said, "I should have been very much surprised if he had not been." "But why, my dear brother?" I said. "Because I asked the Lord to convert him, and I kept on praying that he might be converted; and I should have been very much surprised if he had not been." That is the right sort of faith. I should be very much surprised if some of you that come here, time after time, are not converted. You shall be: blessed be God. We will give him no rest until he hears us. But come! Are we to be praying for you, and you not praying for yourselves? Do you not agree with our prayers? Oh, I trust you may. But, even if you do not, we shall pray for you; and if we were sure that you opposed our intercessions, and were even angry with them, we should pray

all the more, for we mean to have you won for Jesus, by the grace of God, and you may as well come soon as late. We are bound to have you in the church confessing your faith in Jesus. We will never let you go, neither will we cease from our importunate prayers until we get an answer from the throne, and see you saved. Oh that you would yield on this first night of the year to him who can make new creatures of you. God grant you may!

The Lord answer our prayer now, for Jesus' sake, for we seek the salvation of every hearer and every reader of this sermon.

Amen.

SIXTY-ONE
GOOD NEWS FOR THIRSTY SOULS

SERMON GIVEN ON JULY 4, 1880

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 21:6

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 26

“I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.”

REVELATION 21:6.

SALVATION is no small thing. It filled the heart and hands of the Son of God, and therefore it ought not to be neglected by us. The precious promise before us concerns the gift of eternal salvation, and it is set forth as the personal word of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. The apostle is very careful to make this clear, for he inserts the words, “And he said unto me”; as if he knew that poor, troubled hearts might doubt so large a promise were they not assured that Jesus himself had expressly given it. John is a faithful and true witness; in this, as in another case he

could have written, "He knoweth that he saith true." He declares to us that he who is Alpha and Omega, himself gave unto him this word of promise. So specially careful was our Lord that the gospel of grace should be published correctly, and without fail, that he delivered it himself to John, and also said to him, "Write: for these words are true and faithful." Not content with committing the message in words to the apostle, he charges him there and then to put it down in black and white that it might never be forgotten. Thus he proved that he assuredly meant what he said, and meant that it should stand good through all ages: "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely."

It is to be noticed, too, that our Lord spoke these words as a king: "He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new"; and then he added, "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." Divine sovereignty, therefore, is not opposed to the most generous promises of the gospel. Jesus Christ may give or withhold as he pleases; but his will is to give. He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he will have compassion on whom he will have compassion; but the stern truth of his infinite sovereignty is coupled with the sweet declaration of boundless charity—"I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." However much we preach the doctrines of election and divine sovereignty, we never intend to limit the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; but as freely as if we had not believed in sovereignty we publish our Lord's generous gospel words, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."

Again, the doctrine that salvation in us as well as for us is entirely the work of God is not opposed to the most open invitation to come to Christ; for the verse out of which we have culled our text begins thus: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end," that is to say, "I am the founder and finisher

of salvation. I am the A and the Z of all life in the soul." This being accepted as sure truth, we may not therefore conclude that we are to be inactive till some miraculous work is wrought upon us; for the promise is as true as the doctrine, and it suggests immediate reception of Christ. "I will give to him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely," is an invitation to drink, and it will be wise on our parts to accept it at once, and drink to the full.

There is a splendid preface to this promise in the three words, "It is done"; this indeed is the reason why grace can be so freely given. When our blessed Lord had completed his work on the cross, he cried, "It is finished," or "It is done," and then the living stream flowed freely for the sons of men. Then was the rock riven with rivers; then was the stone rolled away from the well's mouth; then was the water of life made to gush from under the altar to fertilize a barren world with its ever deepening flood.

When this world's history is over, when the entire programme of Christ's mediatorial work shall have been worked out, and this dispensation shall have come to an end, then our Lord from his throne shall say, "It is done," and this shall be sung to his glory, that he freely gave to thirsty souls of the fountain of the water of life.

I am most happy to have such a text to preach from! I pray the Lord to bless every word that shall be spoken, and that every one of you— from those in the uppermost gallery, right away to those who crowd the far corners of the area— may come this morning to the celestial spring and drink, and thirst no more. You have drank some of you, many times: come again, and take draughts large and deep, for the fountain is as full as ever. Some of you spiritually may be like those described by Coleridge—

"With throats unslaked, with black lips baked."

Your tongue cleaves to the roof of your mouth with faintness and anguish, you are burning with strong desire and pressed with urgent need. Come ye! Come and welcome! Hasten even before we enter into the sermon: drink from the life-giving fount while we linger in the porch of these prefatory sentences. The words of the redeeming Lord invite you to partake of grace at once. O Holy Spirit, apply them with power to every heart.

There will be two heads of discourse at this time. The first is explanation, and the second is encouragement.

I. The first is EXPLANATION. We shall only mention a few very simple truths. The first is, that all souls by nature are in great and dire want. Our Lord here speaks of those who are "athirst," and thirst is the index of one of our most pressing necessities. Many things we think we want, and yet we live without them; but the need of which thirst is the expression is a very urgent one, involving the loss of all comfort, and even of life itself, if it be not supplied. A traveller who had experienced both hunger and thirst said: "Hunger you may palliate, but thirst is awful." He meant much by saying "thirst is awful." There is no forgetting this pain, and no staying it except by drinking. When thirst swoops down upon a man from out of a burning sky, whether he wanders upon an ocean of sand or brine, it is a woeful day for him. Hath hell itself worse misery than to ask in vain for a drop of water to cool one's tongue? The imagination of the ancients pictured Tantalus as athirst, and mocked by water up to the chin, which fled from him as he stooped. The pain of thirst is keen to the last degree, and the desire to drink is intense beyond imagination. Want of water is a terrible want, but the want of grace is even more dreadful, yet such is the want of all our race. Every man by nature needs grace. He does not always know what he wants; and, indeed, many are so insensible that they do not feel their soul's necessi-

ties; yet those necessities are none the less urgent. There is a void within men which the whole world cannot fill. The experiment of filling the heart with the world has been tried, and it has failed: Alexander the Great, when he had conquered the known world, sat down and wept because there was not another world to conquer. Insatiable is the heart of man: you might as soon fill the bottomless pit. As the horse-leech crieth, "Give, give, give," even so doth man's ravenous desire. If his soul's thirst be not slaked man must die as surely as though slain -by the sword. To die of thirst is one of the most dreadful of deaths; may none of you perish with spiritual thirst. Dear souls, you need a Saviour: you need the pardon of your sins: you need to be made anew in Christ Jesus: and, whether you know it or not, if you do not get these things you will die in your sins, and therefore die eternally, which is the second death. If this thirst be not quenched you are in a desperate plight indeed, for there is nothing before you but "a fearful looking for-of judgment and of fiery indignation."

Some persons begin to be conscious of their soul's great need, and these are they of whom the Saviour speaks as "athirst": they have a dreadful want, and they know it. I sometimes meet with enquirers who, when they are invited to believe in Jesus, reply, "I do not feel my need enough: I wish to take the living water, but I am not thirsty enough." I would have you know that frequently those are the most thirsty who thirst to thirst. If I know that I have a thirst I have at least something; but if I am fearful that I do not even thirst, then my thirsting to thirst is a deeper thirst than thirst itself. I speak thus because of the infirmity of trembling hearts. Permit me to put this before you again. You complain that you have so hard a heart that you do not even feel it to be hard: this fact is a clear proof that yours is a specially hard heart; and just so when you cry, "I desire to desire," it is clear that you have a specially

strong desire. Besides, let me remind you that no man living knows to the full his own need of a Saviour. I suppose if we could altogether see our desperate condition by nature, or know to the full the heinousness of sin, we should become mad. Do not therefore ask to feel your need above measure; but thank God that you know your necessity so much as to apply to Jesus for his gracious supplies. Come and drink! come and drink at the flowing fountain of love! For if you drink you shall live; but a mere sense of need will not afford you relief.

Remember also that certain pains which are supposed to be a part of spiritual thirst are not necessarily connected with it. When a man is seeking Christ it often happens that the devil comes in and suggests all manner of blasphemies and despairing thoughts. Do not be so foolish as to conclude that you are not thirsting after Christ because you have happily been free from these diabolical insinuations. They are not the work of the Spirit of God: they are malicious inventions of the devil, and you are infinitely better without them than with them. I have heard of a convert who was years before he could trust the Saviour because he thought himself to be so great a sinner that the Lord could not possibly save him. Do not imitate so bad an example. Unbelieving thoughts are no part of thirsting after Christ, and they are not to be desired, but dreaded. Be very thankful if you can get to the Lord Jesus easily: it is a choice privilege. You know that you need Christ; you are sure that Christ can supply your need; therefore come and take him without doubt or questioning. Simple unquestioning faith is the very best way to come to Jesus, for it gives us speedy comfort, and yields to our Lord great honour. People are very foolish when they look upon the diseases of Christians as if they were beauties. Young children have a great many little complaints before they grow up to be men; I need not mention them: every mother knows what a succession of troubles visit a

numerous family. But suppose you knew one who had escaped these infantine disorders, what would you think of him if he were to murmur, "I don't think I can have been born; I don't think I can have life, for I never felt those complaints of infancy, which other people speak of." You would say, "You silly man, you ought to be glad that you had such a healthy childhood. Diseases are in a measure marks of life, for we may be sure that the dead do not suffer from them; but they are not necessary as proofs of vitality; neither are doubts, despondencies, and despairs at all needful as tokens of regeneration. Do you need Christ? Do you desire him? Do you seek him? Then you are included in this text: "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." Do not look upon your thirst as a preparation for Christ, for thus you will be seduced into making a Christ out of your own needs, and that will be ridiculous and ruinous. What would you think of a man who expected to find a remedy in his disease? He must be bereft of reason who expects to find an antidote within the poison. In our case we have to deal with an omnipotent Physician, and however remarkable may be the development of our disease, the Lord Jesus knows the case, and is able to overcome all the difficulties of it, and bring us sound health. Therefore, come and trust him. Dost thou perceive thy nature's great and urgent want of Christ, and dost thou desire Christ? If so, this text is for thee, "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely."

Thirst is a desire arising out of a need. Now, so long as you have that desire, you need not stop to question your right to take Christ. A man is thirsty, even if he cannot explain what thirst is and how it comes. I must confess, myself, that I could not give you a physiological account of the origin and effect of the phenomenon of thirst. I suppose that certain organs which require moisture begin to dry up or collapse without it, and so

disarrange the functions and cause pain. If I were some learned anatomist I could give you a lecture upon the theory of thirst; and yet, though I cannot do this, I know practically what thirst is as well as a doctor could tell me. When I am thirsty, and am invited to drink, I do not refuse because I cannot explain my thirst. Nor is there any absolute necessity, in order to salvation, that you should know all about how it is that Christ can supply your needs. I may not be able to explain scientifically why this glass of water quenches my thirst, but I know that it does so: the liquid gets at the various organs and supplies them with what they require. I know enough about water to drink it when I am in need, and, practically, that is all that is wanted. If you know enough about Christ to understand that he can meet every need of your soul, and if you take him to be your all in all, the matter is done. Remember, Jesus Christ often saves poor, simple-minded men when he does not save philosophers. If you take the Lord Jesus to be yours you shall as truly have the benefit of his salvation as if you were a father in Israel.

Let us notice once again that being thirsty is not enough. The text promiseth water from the fountain of life to the man that is athirst; but thirst cannot quench thirst. Some seekers act as if they thought it would. "Oh," say they, "I am not thirsty enough; I wish I felt my need more": but, my dear friend, your thirst will not be quenched by being increased. "I should have some hope," says one, "if I were more sensible of my danger." Yet that is not a gospel hope. Why should a man's despairing because of his danger operate to deliver him from danger? As long as you stop where you are you may get more and more sensible of danger, until you reach the sensitiveness of morbid despondency; but you will be no nearer salvation. It is not your sense of need, it is Christ's power to bless you, and your yielding yourself up to Christ, that will bring you salvation. The remedy for the thirsty soul is very plainly hinted at in the

text. What does a thirsty man do to get rid of his thirst? He drinks. Perhaps there is no better representation of faith in all the Word of God than that. To drink is to receive— to take in the refreshing draught— is all. A man's face may be unwashed, but yet he can drink; he may be very unworthy character, but yet a draught of water will remove his thirst. Drinking is such a remarkably easy thing, it is even more simple than eating. I heard the other day of a sad, sad case of a workman with cancer of the tongue who cannot eat. He has not taken solid victuals for six months, but still he can receive food by drinking. When people are dying you can still moisten their lips: when nothing else can possibly pass their throats they can receive liquid. So, dear soul, whatever thy state may be, thou canst surely receive Christ, for he comes to thee like a cup of cold water. Does not water run down the throat of itself? So is it with the gospel. Only be willing to open your mouth to have it, and it is yours. Nothing is simpler. Sometimes divines explain faith until nobody knows what it is; and often and often I have known sinners look at their faith until they have quite forgotten to look to Jesus. This is as foolish as if a man desired to see a star, and having found a telescope, stood gazing at it instead of through it. How much he thinks of his telescope. He lengthens and shortens the tube, and examines it up and down to see whether it is a good instrument. But he does not see the star! No, and he never will till he uses the telescope properly and looks through it. Do not think of believing in your own faith, but believe in Jesus. Subordinate faith to Christ; it would be ill indeed to prefer your cup to the fountain. When you want comfort, neither muse upon your need, nor study yourself, nor weigh your faith; but set your whole mind upon him who is heaven's glory and the sinner's only hope. The essence of faith lies in having done with self and in receiving from without, and that, not by any laborious process, but as easily as men

receive water by drinking. We do not drink by machinery; we just open our mouths and suffer the water to run down; even thus we receive Christ. Be willing to have grace; be ready, as it were, to imbibe it by the mouth of faith. O blessed faith, which is nothing of itself and yet enriches its possessor! O blessed grace, divine living water, which is ours as soon as ever we are willing to have it!

Surely there is sweet encouragement here to those poor souls who have said, "I cannot trust Christ; I dare not receive him." You may freely receive him, and if you do but get him, he will never take himself away from you. If I were very, very thirsty, and I found myself in your room, and saw water on the table, I would not ask whether I might drink; I would drink first, and ask you afterwards, knowing that you could not take it away from me after I had once drank it. A poor dog stands at the door of a butcher's shop. He sees meat, but he does not know whether he may have it. If he is very, very hungry he makes a snatch at it; and when he once gets it he runs off to eat it, for he knows that although the butcher may take it away from him when it is in his mouth,, he cannot take it from him after he has eaten it. Now then, needy ones, receive the grace of God into your inmost hearts, receive Jesus into yourselves, and there is no possibility that he will be taken away from you. Drink, thirsty one; drink to the full; thou canst never be deprived of that which thou hast received into thine inmost self.

Thus I have endeavoured to explain the text; I hope I have not darkened what I wished to set in clearest light. O Spirit of God, make men see this open secret, this plain riddle of drinking at the fount of grace!

II. We are to speak secondly by way of ENCOURAGEMENT. I am going to dwell upon this figure of thirst as it is used in the Scriptures, that I may lead every soul that feels its

need of Christ to take him at once. The first encouragement is this, our Lord Jesus Christ keeps open house for all thirsty ones. Kindly turn to the Word of God, for we must back up everything with Scripture this morning: let us read the seventeenth verse of the twenty-second chapter of the Book of Revelation; "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." No voice at Christ's door saith, "Stay away"; but three voices join with his in crying, "Come." The Spirit and the bride, and he that heareth, all cry, "Come," "Come," "Come." No officer stands at the door to sort out the comers, and to say, "This may come, and the other may not"; but the invitation is, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Said I not truly that Christ keeps open house? What can be more free or more comprehensive than this? Only publish it in your neighbourhood that you intend to keep open house for a day, and that everybody who comes may eat and drink what he likes at your expense; you need not advertize it many times in the newspapers; only tell a few of the hungry brotherhood, and they will swarm like bees. I will warrant you a full table from early dawn to set of sun in any of our crowded quarters, if you will only provide the best meat and say, "whosoever will, let him come." How strange it is! How sadly strange, that our Lord Jesus keeps open house, with better viands than prince ever put upon his table, and yet men will not come. They crowd for the bread of the body, but neglect their souls. Our Lord bids us go into the highways and hedges, and compel men to come, for otherwise it seems they would rather perish with hunger and thirst than partake of the provisions of his grace. O, sirs, if ye do perish, it is no fault of Christ's, for his table is furnished, and the entrance to his banquet-hall is free. In his name do I declare the absolute freeness of his grace. He has taken the doors from off the hinges to

set his hall wide open; he has put away all sentinels from his table, and ordained that none of his servants may hinder coming souls. Our orders are, "Whosoever will, let him come," and it would be a plain violation of our Master's orders if we were to hinder any. His generous invitation is, "Come and welcome! Come and welcome! Come and welcome! Let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Now, as if it were not enough to keep open house, our Lord Jesus goes further; for in the next place, he issues many invitations of the freest kind I will only quote one out of very many. Turn to the first verse of the fifty-fifth chapter of Isaiah, "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Grace must be gratis; the word "freely" in our text makes it clear that salvation is an absolute gift, but here the feat is put in a negative form that there maybe no mistake whatever. Mercy is "without money and without price"—without price in any possible sense. We neither purchase, nor procure, nor earn, nor produce salvation by merit, effort, sacrifice, or service. It comes to us, not because we deserve it, but because we need it. We are blessed with it out of the goodwill and pleasure of the Lord, and we do not purchase it by good deeds, good desires, or pious resolves, or persevering endeavours. We are empty and he fills us. In order that you may come to Jesus, no preparation is required. You may come just as you are, and come at once: only confess that you need him, desire to have him, and then take him by trusting him. He is like wine and milk, supplying delight and satisfaction, and you are to take him as men would take a drink. How could the invitation be put more broadly than it is? How could it be uttered more earnestly? It has a "Ho!" to give it tongue. Tradesmen in certain parts of London stand outside of their

shops and cry "Buy, buy!" or call out "Ho!" to the passers-by because they are anxious to sell their wares. Jesus is yet more eager to distribute his rich grace, for he longs to see men saved. Ho! ye that pass by, stop here awhile: turn your attention this way: here is something worthy of your thoughts. "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money." There are many such invitations, in the Scriptures, and if not all expressed by the same metaphor, they are all equally as free and as clear as the one before us. Jesus entreats men to look to him and live: he bids them come to him and find rest unto their souls.

Does any one say "Well, I know that the ever-blessed Saviour keeps open house, and that he invites men freely; but still I am afraid to come"? Peradventure, dear friend, we may overcome your diffidence by the help of God if we remind you that our Lord makes a proclamation, which has the weight of his personal dignity about it, and comes as from a king. Turn to the seventh of John, thirty-seventh verse:—"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." This is the sovereign word of the King of kings. Standing up in the midst of the multitude, he proclaimed his own full and free salvation, and with his own voice declared the day of grace, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." O anxious enquirer, what more do you want? I wish you could picture Jesus standing in our midst this morning and using such words! But if you cannot, if neither faith nor imagination can help you to realize his presence, still he is here, and by the mouth of his servant he still cries in the place of concourse, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." Will you not come? What is it keeps you back? The call is to any man, any woman, any child, anybody: anyone that needs

mercy, anyone who desires salvation, let him come and have Jesus and eternal life. If you think yourself an outcast, if you seem shut out with seven bolted doors, yet do not take upon yourself the responsibility of condemning yourself. Come and try! If you thirst, come to Christ, and he will give you grace at once.

Peradventure a trembler replies, "Ay! here is a proclamation; but I should be more comforted if I could read promises." Our text is one of the freest promises possible,— "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." Come and test the promise now and see if it be not true. But if you require another, turn to a grand gospel chapter in Isaiah, the forty-first, and let me read you the seventeenth verse. Will not this suit you? "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water." Now then, you that cannot pray; you that are so dried up with inward drought that you cannot get the words out, and scarcely feel the desires within; all you whose very hearts do fail you so that you despair of hope, believe this promise of God, who cannot lie, and plead it before him. See if God will not open for you fountains on the very mountain tops, where you could least expect them, and give you comfort which you looked not for. Shall I quote another promise out of many? There is a sound of abundant refreshment in it. It is in the forty-fourth of Isaiah, second verse: "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground." He will not only give you enough to drink, but pour it on you to drench you with delight. Your hot and weary feet shall be ready to start again upon the journey of life, because washed and cleansed by love. There is grace enough in God to

allow it to be lavished upon you. If I were in your case, poor thirsty soul, I would catch at such a promise as that. "Lord," I would say, "I long to have thee: I know I cannot be saved without thee; I am sure that thou canst save me; and lo! I trust thee. If I die, I will die trusting in thee! You are saved, my brother. There is no fear that God will ever reject a soul that has come to this pass; he will pour floods upon you yet.

Our gracious Lord, still further to encourage souls to come to him, has been pleased to give many gracious explanations of what he meant. You will find one in the fourth chapter of John. How sweetly he explained to the woman at the well what living water is, and what drinking of it is. He tells you that, by believing in him, you receive into yourself everlasting life. Further on, in the sixth chapter of John, at the thirty-fifth verse, he shows what drinking of the living water is: "And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

I have opened up the plan of salvation many, many times, but I will try again. To be saved you must heartily trust Christ, and him alone. You are to believe on him. First believe him;—that is, be convinced that what he says is true: and then believe on him,—that is, depend upon what he has done, and on what he is. He will make his word good to you. Commit your soul to the Redeemer's keeping, and he will keep it safely.

*"Venture on him; venture wholly;
Let no other trust intrude."*

There is no venture, but I put it so that you may catch the idea. Lean your whole weight on Jesus. Hold on to Jesus as to a life-buoy. Buckle your fate to Jesus, to sink or swim with him. If he is a Saviour, trust him; put all your eggs into this basket; float all your treasures in this vessel. Let it be so that if he can and

will save sinners he will save you. His word is pledged that he will save all those who trust him, accept that word as infallible, and confide all your future to its truth. This is the way of life. I tell you, beloved hearers, that my own personal hope lies altogether in the hand of my Lord, and in no degree elsewhere. I have now known the Lord some thirty years or more, and at this moment if any one should ask me what is my hope of eternal life, I can only answer that it is just what it was thirty years ago, namely, the work and death of the Lord Jesus in my room and stead. "Have you not preached the gospel for years?" Yes, I have, with all my might, and I have by God's blessing brought many thousands to repentance and faith; but I do not in the slightest degree rest my hope of heaven upon my preaching. Whatever the Lord enables me to do for him is his doing and his work, and he alone must have the glory of it; I dare not claim a grain of merit for it. I have only Christ to trust to, and I want no more. I have no righteousness of my own, but I trust to free grace and dying love. The cross will float me into the port of peace; if it does not I must be lost, for every other life-boat has gone to the bottom long ago. Christ Jesus is my hope, and I am persuaded that he is a Saviour as suitable for you as he is for me. You young man over there, who are about the age which I had reached when I first trusted Christ, I pray you look to him at once. Cease to be always looking to self. If you are thirsty, what is the good of looking down your own throat? What is the good of complaining that you feel too thirsty, or not thirsty enough? Man! rise up and drink. Poor sinner, get away from thyself to Christ, and take Christ into thyself as a man takes water into his body by simply drinking it. Take Christ to be your own Saviour, receive him to be your sole reliance; and you are a saved man. His sacred Book declares the believer to be saved, and if you, being a believer, are not saved, then none of us can have a hope.

Furthermore, our blessed Lord, in order to make this very plain, has set before us lively emblems. He gives us the figure of the rock in the wilderness. You remember how he supplied Israel's needs from day to day till he brought them into rest. The sun blazed upon the desert sands, and the pilgrims were sorely tried with thirst, so that they murmured, and thought it better to die than to suffer such inward burning. How were their pains removed? Moses with his rod struck the rock, and out leaped a stream of which they drank with eager joy. Can you not see them bowing down for a draught, or holding their vessels at the place where first the water springs forth. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the smitten rock, whence flow life and refreshing to all who will accept the grace. All the need of your spirit, my hearer, will be supplied if you are willing to take of this water of life freely. Come, dip your earthen vessel into this heavenly river, and thirst no more. A smitten Saviour is the one hope of a sorrowing sinner. Read Psalm cvii. 5, and you will find another symbol, or rather the same in a fresh form. "They wandered in the wilderness, where there is no way; they found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them; then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses." We are at this moment a great caravan travelling across this wilderness world. We are all in need, and God only can supply us, but, blessed be his name, that he will do if we cry to him in our trouble, and are willing to receive the grace which he gives us in Christ Jesus our Saviour.

Beloved, the very cup of communion, and the whole communion table itself, is meant, among other gracious lessons, to teach us the way of salvation. Here is bread. What am I to do with it? Look at it? study it? analyse it? I may if I choose, but that is not what it was meant for: it was intended to be eaten; use it that way and you use it well. The wine, too, is meant to be drunk; it is not placed upon the table to be gazed upon, or to be

quarrelled over, or to be distilled, but to be drank. This is an act which any thirsty person can perform. You poor souls who cannot do any good, thing, surely you can receive of the food which your heavenly Father provides. If you cannot bear fruit and so give something out, you can take something in. If there be nothing in you, there is all the more room to receive of the divine fulness. Oh then, let the communion cup, concerning which the Saviour said, "Drink,"— let that tell you how to receive Christ, how to be saved by heartily accepting Christ.

Our Lord Jesus Christ in his wisdom has given us, in addition, many encouraging instances of men who have thirsted for grace. I will not detain you with many of them. We sang a part of the forty-second psalm this morning, where David said he longed for the living God as the hart panteth after the water brooks. Further on in the sixty-third psalm he cries "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God," and a few verses down he sings, "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness." If you thirst after God you shall soon be satisfied. May your thirst increase until you get him, and then shall you be filled to the full.

Once more. Our Lord has been pleased to give his own special blessing to the thirsty ones; for, when he opened his mouth upon the mountain and gave out the benedictions which commence his memorable sermon, he said, "Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Oh! then, ye thirsty ones, you are blessed in your very desires and longings.

I do not know what more to say to you. What more could even inspiration utter? This blessed Book has set before you such a wealth of precious things that one can barely imagine more. What is wanted is that the truth be applied, and that you do now come and take Christ. I beg you to recollect that you must take Christ by a personal act, each one for himself or

herself. Each one must willingly believe, for God forces Christ on nobody. If I am thirsty I must drink; no well or river can quench my thirst if I do not personally drink. It stands just thus, dear soul: you must accept Christ or you are lost. Be sure of this, that God himself cannot, will not, save you unless you accept Christ. He is omnipotent, but he cannot act contrary to his own solemn declaration, and he has said, "He that believeth not shall be damned"; if you do not believe in Christ you must be lost to a certainty. You must yourself believe or be a cast-away. Do not think that the grace of repentance or faith will be wrought in you against your will. You labour under a great mistake if you think so. You must joyfully take Christ or die in your sins. Why should you not take him? Is this some bitter medicine I am pressing on you, and are you a silly child who must be coaxed into taking it? No, I set before you the Lord Jesus, who is sweetness itself. Why should you need persuading? Do you secretly hope that there may be some other salvation? You are greatly deceived if you do, for the Son of God would not have died to save if it could have been done in any other way. Of no other fountain can you drink. What keeps you back from this? Are you trying to find reasons why you should not come to Christ? That is ruinous to yourself. Few persons hunt up arguments against themselves. If there is any money in dispute in a court of law each party will hunt out reasons for his having it; but I never saw a man stand up in court and plead against his own interests. Will you turn advocate for the devil against yourself? Will you urge arguments to seal your own condemnation? When Jesus Christ says, "Let him that is athirst come," will you stand in your own way and block up your own path to life? Will you give God the lie for the sake of destroying your own soul? Surely a mania must be upon you! It is the wisest thing to say, "I am an undeserving, hell-deserving sinner; but if God is infinite in mercy, why should he not save me as

well as anyone else? He declares that if I trust his Son he will pardon me: I will trust his Son and partake of his forgiveness. He bids me drink of the water of life: I will drink. I will not question my right to come: he bids me do so, and I will obey. I take him at his word: I trust in the blood of Jesus. Lord, receive me, for I receive thy Son. I have been trying to save myself, and waiting until I felt something, or did something, in and of myself; but now, Lord, although I neither see nor feel anything but my lost estate, I do believe that Jesus can save me, and I trust on him." If this be your true act, dear hearer, you are a saved man. Even if you only believed a minute ago, you have passed from death to life. The moment a sinner believes he is justified; the atoning blood operates the moment faith sees it. O thou who hast but this instant believed, go thy way and rejoice; thou art in the hand of Jesus, and none can pluck thee thence.

I have thus tried to preach a very plain sermon, containing the ABC of the gospel. I believe that God will bless it to the conversion of many: I shall be terribly disappointed if he does not. I have entreated him to let his own message have free course and mighty effect, and I know that he will hear me. I beg God's people to pray that this sermon may enclose within the gospel net more fish than ever we have had before. Some of you seekers have hitherto thought the door of mercy to be bolted against you. See, it stands wide open. Come and welcome. If any softness of feeling is stealing over you let it work while you gladly yield. Do not talk nonsense on the way home, and so lose the effect of the discourse. Hasten to your chambers, fall upon your knees, and rise not till you have accepted Jesus as your own Saviour. If you do so salvation will have come to your house this day, and God will be glorified.

Amen and amen.

SIXTY-TWO
THE LAMB - THE LIGHT

SERMON GIVEN ON JULY 31, 1864

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 21:23

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 10

“And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.”

REVELATION 21:23

To the lover of Jesus it is very pleasant to observe how the Lord Jesus Christ has always stood foremost in glory from before the foundation of the world, and will do so as long as eternity shall last. If we look back by faith to the time of the creation, we find our Lord with his Father as one brought up with him. “When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. While as yet he had not made

the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: when he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep.” He was that wisdom who was never absent from the Father’s counsels in the great work of creation, whether it be the birth of angels or the making of worlds of men. One of the first events ever recorded in Scripture history is, “When he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, let all the angels of God worship him.” Such words were never spoken of any creature, but only of him who is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, glorious for ever: the firstborn of every creature, the head of the household of God, the express image of his person, and the fulness of his glory. In the earliest periods of which we possess any knowledge, Jesus Christ stood exalted far above all principalities and powers, and every name that is named. When human history dawns, and the history of God’s Church commences, you still find Christ preeminent. All the types of the early Church are only to be opened up by him as the key. It would have been nothing to be of the seed of Israel, if it had not been for the promise of the Shiloh that was to come; it would have been in vain that the sacrifices were offered in the wilderness, that the ark abode between the curtains, or that the golden pot which had the manna was covered with the mercy-seat, if there had not been a real signification of Christ in all these. The religion of the Jew would have been very emptiness if it had not been for Christ, who is the substance of the former shadows. Run on to the period of the prophets, and in all their prophesying do you not see additional glimpses of the glory of Christ? When they mount to the greatest heights of eloquence do they not speak of him? Whenever their soul is carried up, as in a chariot of fire, is not the mantle left behind them a word telling of the glory of Jesus? They could never glow with

fervent heat, except concerning him. Even when they denounced the judgments of God, they paused between the crashes of God's thunder to let some drops of mercy fall on man in words of promise concerning him who was to come. It is always Christ from the opening leaf of Genesis to the closing note of Malachi—Christ, Christ, Christ, and nothing but Christ. It is very delightful, brethren, when we come to such a text as this, to observe that what was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end, Amen. In that millennial state of which the text speaks, Jesus Christ is to be the light thereof, and all its glory is to proceed from him; and if the text speaketh concerning heaven and the blessedness hereafter, all its light, and blessings, and glory, stream from him: "The Lamb is the light thereof." If we read the text and think of its connection with us to-day, we must confess that all our joy and peace flow from the same fountain. Jesus Christ is the Sun of Righteousness to us, as well as to the saints above.

I shall try then—though I am conscious of my feebleness to handle so great a matter—I shall try, as best I can, to extol the Lord Jesus, first of all, in the excellence of his glory in the millennial state; next, in heaven; and then, thirdly, in the condition of every heavenly-minded man who is on his way to paradise—in all these cases "the Lamb is the light thereof."

I. First, then, a few words concerning THE MILLENNIAL PERIOD.

We are not given to prophesyings in this place. There are some of our brethren who delight much in them. Perhaps it is well that there should be some who should devote their time and thoughts to that portion of God's Word which abounds in mysteries; but for our part, we have been so engaged in seeking to win souls, and in endeavouring to contend with the common errors of the day, that we have scarcely ventured to land upon the rock of Patmos, or to peer into the dark recesses of Daniel

and Ezekiel. Yet this much we have ever learned most clearly, that on this earth, where sin and Satan gained victory over God through the fall of man, Christ is to achieve a complete triumph over all his foes—not on another battle-field, but on this. The fight is not over. It commenced by Satan's attack upon our mother Eve; and Christ has never left the field from that day until now. The fight has lasted thousands of years; it grows sterner every day; it is not over; and it never shall be stayed until the serpent's head is effectually bruised, and Christ Jesus shall have gotten unto himself a perfect victory. Do not think the Lord will allow Satan to have even so much as one battle to call his own. In the great campaign, when the history shall be written, it shall be said, "The Lord reigneth;" all along the line he hath gotten the victory. There shall be victory in every place and spot; and the conquest of Jesus shall be complete and perfect. We believe, then, that in this very earth, where superstition has set up its idols, Jesus Christ shall be adored. Here, where blasphemy has defiled human lips, songs of praise shall rise from islands of the sea and from the dwellers among the rocks. In this very country, among those very men who became the tools of Satan, and whose dwelling-places – were dens of mischief, there shall be found instruments of righteousness, lips to praise God, and occasions of eternal glory unto the Most High. O Satan, thou mayst boast of what thou hast done, and thou mayst think thy sceptre still secure, but he cometh, even he who rides upon the white horse of victory; and when he comes, thou shalt not stand against him, for the two-edged sword which goeth out of his mouth shall drive thee and thy hosts back to the place from whence thou camest. Let us rejoice that Scripture is so clear and so explicit upon this great doctrine of the future triumph of Christ over the whole world!

We are not bound to enter into any particulars concerning what form that triumph shall assume. We believe that the Jews

will be converted, and that they will be restored to their own land. We believe that Jerusalem will be the central metropolis of Christ's kingdom; we also believe that all the nations shall walk in the light of the glorious city which shall be built at Jerusalem. We expect that the glory which shall have its centre there, shall spread over the whole world, covering it as with a sea of holiness, happiness, and delight. For this we look with joyful expectation. During that period the Lord himself by his glorious presence shall set aside the outward rites of his sanctuary. "The city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it." Perhaps by sun and moon here, are intended those ordinary means of enlightenment which the Church now wants. We want the Lords' Supper to remind us of the body and blood of Christ; but when Christ comes there will be no Lord's Suppers, for it is written, "Do this until he come;" but when he comes, then will be the final period of the remembrance-token, because the person of Christ will be in our midst. Neither will you need ministers any longer, any more than men need candles when the sun ariseth. They shall not say one to another, "Know the Lord: for all shall know him, from the least to the greatest." There may be even in that period certain solemn assemblies and Sabbath-days, but they will not be of the same kind as we have now; for the whole earth will be a temple, every day will be a Sabbath, the avocations of men will all be priestly, they shall be a nation of priests—distinctly so, and they shall day without night serve God in his temple, so that everything to which they set their hand shall be a part of the song which shall go up to the Most High. Oh! blessed day. Would God it had dawned, when these temples should be left, because the whole world should be a temple for God. But whatever may be the splendours of that day—and truly here is a temptation to let our imagination revel—however bright may be the walls set with chalcedony and amethyst, however splendid the gates

which are of one pearl, whatever may be the magnificence set forth by the “streets of gold,” this we know, that the sum and substance, the light and glory of the whole will be the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, “for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.” Now, I want the Christian to meditate over this. In the highest, holiest, and happiest era that shall ever dawn upon this poor earth, Christ is to be her light. When she puts on her wedding garments, and adorns herself as a bride is adorned with jewels, Christ is to be her glory and her beauty. There shall be no ear-rings in her ears made with other gold than that which cometh from his mine of love; there shall be no crown set upon her brow fashioned by any other hand than his hands of wisdom and of grace. She sits to reign, but it shall be upon his throne; she feeds, but it shall be upon his bread; she triumphs, but it shall be because of the might which ever belongs to him who is the Rock of Ages. Come then, Christian, contemplate for a moment thy beloved Lord. Jesus, in a millennial age, shall be the light and the glory of the city of the new Jerusalem. Observe then, that Jesus makes the light of the millennium, because his ‘presence will be that which distinguishes that age from the present. That age is to be akin to paradise. Paradise God first made upon earth, and paradise God will last make. Satan destroyed it; and God will never have defeated his enemy until he has re-established paradise, until once again a new Eden shall bless the eyes of God’s creatures. Now, the very glory and privilege of Eden I take to be not the river which flowed through it with its four branches, nor that it came from the land of Havilah which hath dust of gold—I do not think the glory of Eden lay in its grassy walks, or in the boughs bending with luscious fruit—but its glory lay in this, that the “Lord God walked in the garden in the cool of the day.” Here was Adam’s highest privilege, that he had companionship with the Most High. In those days angels sweetly sang

that the tabernacle of God was with man, and that he did dwell amongst them. Brethren, the paradise which is to be regained for us will have this for its essential and distinguishing mark, that the Lord shall dwell amongst us. This is the name by which the city is to be called—Jehovah Shammah, the Lord is there. It is true we have the presence of Christ in the Church now—"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." We have the promise of his constant indwelling: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." But still that is vicariously by his Spirit, but soon he is to be personally with us. That very man who once died upon Calvary is to live here. He—that same Jesus—who was taken up from us, shall come in like manner as he was taken up from the gazers of Galilee. Rejoice, rejoice, beloved, that he comes, actually and really comes; and this shall be the joy of that age, that he is among his saints, and dwelleth in them, with them, and talketh and walketh in their midst.

The presence of Christ it is which will be the means of the peace of the age. In that sense Christ will be the light of it, for he is our peace. It will be through his presence that the lion shall eat straw like an ox, that the leopard shall lie down with the kid. It will not be because men have had more enlightenment, and have learned better through advancing civilisation, that they shall beat their swords into ploughshares. It is notorious that the more civilised nations become the more terrible are their instruments of destruction; and when they do go to war, the more bloody and protracted their wars become. I venture to say, that if in a thousand years' time Christ shall not come, if war were to break out, where we now fight for ten or twenty years we shall have the venomous hatred of one another and the means of carrying on a war for a century. Instead of advancing in peacefulness, I do fear me the world has gone back. We certainly cannot boast now of living in halcyon days

of peace. But Christ's presence shall change the hearts of men. Then spontaneously at sight of the great Prince of Peace, they shall cast away their armour and their weapons of war, and shall learn war no more. In that sense then, because his presence will be the cause of that happy period, he is the light of it.

Again, Christ's presence is to that period its special instruction. They shall need no candle, neither light of the sun, nor of the moon. Why? Because Christ's presence will be sufficiently instructive to the sons of men. When the Lord Jesus Christ comes, superstition will not need an earnest testimony to confute it—it will hide its head. Idolatry will not need the missionary to preach against it—the idols he shall utterly abolish, and shall cast them to the moles and to the bats. Men and women, at the sight of Christ, and at the knowledge that he is reigning gloriously upon earth, will give up their unbelief. The Jew will recognise the Son of David, and the Gentile will rejoice to worship him who was once slain as the King of the Jews. The presence of Christ shall do more for the enlightenment of his Church than the teaching of all her officers and ministers in all ages. She shall then in the sight of her Lord come to a fulness of knowledge, and have a perfect understanding of God's Word.

Once again, Christ will be the light of that period in the sense of being its glory. Oh! it is the glory of the Christian now to think that Christ reigns in heaven. In this we boast in every season of depression and of downcasting, that he is exalted and sits at the right hand of the Father. But the glory of that age shall be that Christ is come, that he sits upon the throne of David as well as upon the throne of God; that his enemies bow before him and lick the dust. Think, my brethren, of the splendour of that time, when from every nation and land they shall bring him tribute, when praises shall ascend from every land, when the streets of that city shall be thronged every day with

adoring worshippers, when he shall ride forth conquering and to conquer, and his saints shall follow him upon white horses! We sometimes have high days and holidays, when kings and princes go abroad, and the streets are full, and people crowd even to the chimney-pots to see them as they ride along; but what shall it be to see King Jesus crowned with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals! What a contrast between the cavalcade winding its way along the streets of Jerusalem, along the *via dolorosa* up to the mount of execution—what a contrast, I say! Then women followed him and wept, but now men will follow him and shout for joy: then he carried his cross, but now he shall ride in state: then his enemies mocked him and gloated their eyes with his sufferings; but then his enemies shall be put to confusion and covered with shame, and upon himself shall his crown flourish: then it was the hour of darkness and the time of the prince of the pit, but now it shall be the day of light and the victory of Emmanuel, and the sounding of his praise both in earth and heaven. Contemplate this thought; and though I speak of it so feebly, yet it may ravish your hearts with transport that Christ is the Sun of that long-expected, that blessed day, that Christ shall be the highest mountain of all the hills of joy, the widest river of all the streams of delight, that whatever there may be of magnificence and of triumph, Christ shall be the centre and soul of it all. Oh! to be present and to see him in his own light, the King of kings, and Lord of lords!

II. And now we will turn our thoughts another way from the millennial period to THE STATE OF THE GLORIFIED IN HEAVEN ITSELF. “The city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it.”

The inhabitants of the better world are independent of creature comforts. Let us think that over for a minute. We have no reason to believe that they daily pray, “Give us this day our

daily bread." Their bodies shall dwell in perpetual youth. They shall have no need of raiment; their white robes shall never wear out, neither shall they ever be defiled. Having food and raiment on earth therewith we are content, but in heaven "they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these;" yet the fields yield them neither flax nor any other material for clothing, neither do the acres of heaven yield them bread. They are satisfied by leaning upon God, needing not the creature for support. They need no medicine to heal their disease, "for the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick." They need no sleep to recruit their fatigue, and although sleep is sweet and balmy—God's own medicine—yet they rest not day nor night, but unweariedly praise him in his temple.

They need no social ties in heaven. We need here the associations of friendship and of family love, but they are neither married nor are given in marriage there. Whatever comfort they may derive from association with their fellows is something extra and beyond, they do not need any: their God is enough. They shall need no teachers there; they shall doubtless commune with one another concerning the things of God, and tell to one another the strange things which the Lord hath wrought for them, but they shall not need this by way of instruction; they shall all be taught of the Lord, for in heaven "the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." There is an utter independence in heaven, then, of all the creatures. No sun and no moon are wanted—nay, no creatures whatever. Here we lean upon the friendly arm, but there they lean upon their beloved and upon him alone. Here we must have the help of our companions, but there they find all they want in Christ alone. Here we look to the meat which perisheth, and to the raiment which decays before the moth, but there they find everything thing in God. We have to use the

bucket to get water from the well, but there they drink from the well-head, and put their lips down to the living water. Here the angels bring us blessings, but we shall want no messengers from heaven then. They shall need no Gabriels there to bring their love-notes from God, for there they shall see him face to face. Oh! what a blessed time shall that be, when we shall have mounted above every second cause and shall hang upon the bare arm of God! What a glorious hour when God, and not his creatures, God, and not his works, but God himself, Christ himself shall be our daily joy.

*"Plunged in the Godhead's deepest sea,
And lost in His immensity."*

Our souls shall then have attained the perfection of bliss.

While in heaven, it is clear that the glorified are quite independent of creature aid, do not forget that they are entirely dependent for their joy upon Jesus Christ. He is their sole spiritual light. They have nothing else in heaven to give them perfect satisfaction but himself. The language here used, "the Lamb is the light thereof," may be read in two or three ways. By your patience, let us so read it.

In heaven Jesus is the light in the sense of joy, for light is ever in Scripture the emblem of joy. Darkness betokens sorrow, but the rising of the sun indicates the return of holy joy. Christ is the joy of heaven. Do they rejoice in golden harps, in palm branches and white robes? They may do so, but they only rejoice in these things as love-gifts from him. Their joy is compounded of this—"Jesus chose us, Jesus loved us, Jesus brought us, Jesus washed us, Jesus robed us, Jesus kept us, Jesus glorified us; here we are, entirely through the Lord Jesus—through him alone." Each one of these thoughts shall be to them like a cluster from the vines of Eshcol. Why methinks

there is an eternal source of joy in that one thought, "Jesus bought me with his blood." Oh! to sit on the mountains of heaven and look across to the lowly hill of Calvary, and see the Saviour bleed! What emotions of joy shall stir the depths of our soul, when we reflect that there upon the bloody tree he counted not his life dear unto him that he might redeem us unto God.

*"Calvary's summit shall I trace,
View the heights and depths of grace,
Count the purple drops, and say,
"Thus my sins were washed away."*

In glory they think of the character and person of Jesus, and these are wells of delight to them. Thus they muse—Jesus is eternal God; his enemies reviled him, but still he is God. Jesus became the virgin's child; Jesus lived a life of holiness, and Jesus died; but see what triumph springs from his condescension and his shame: he rises, he ascends, and leads captivity captive; he scatters gifts amongst men; he reigns over earth, and hell, and heaven; King of kings, and Lord of lords. "The government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, the Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." When I have listened to Handel's music in "The Messiah," where that great musician wakes every instrument to praise the name of Jesus, I have felt ready to die with excess of delight that such music should ever have been composed by mortal man to the honour of our great Messiah; but what will be the music of celestial choirs? How would such hearts as ours burst, and such souls as ours leap out of their bodies, if they could but know while here, such joys as celestials know above. But, beloved, our faculties shall be strengthened, our capacities shall be enlarged, our whole being

shall be expanded, and thus we shall be able to bear the full swell of seraphic music, and join in it without fainting from delight, while they sing of the glory of the Son of Man—the Son of God. Christ is the light of heaven, then, because he is the substance of its joy.

Light may be viewed in another sense. Light is the cause of beauty. That is obvious to you all. Take the light away, and there is no beauty anywhere. The fairest woman charms the eye no more than a heap of ashes when the sun has departed. Your garden may be gay with many coloured flowers, but when the sun goeth down you cannot know them from the grass which borders them. You look upon the trees, all fair with the verdure of summer, but when the sun goes down they are all hung in black. Without light no radiance flashes from the sapphire, no peaceful ray proceedeth from the pearl. There is nought of beauty left when light is gone. Light is the mother of beauty. In such sense the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the light of heaven; that is to say, all the beauty of the saints above comes from God incarnate. Their excellence, their joy, their triumph, their glory, their ecstatic bliss, all spring from him. As planets, they reflect the light of the Sun of Righteousness; they live as beams proceeding from the central orb, as streams leaping from the eternal fountain. If he withdrew, they must die; if his glory were veiled, their glory must expire. Think of this, Christian, and I am sure you will be reminded how true this is beneath the sky, as well as above, that if light be the mother of beauty, Christ is the light; there is nothing good, nor comely, nor gracious about any one of us, except as we get it from Christ, and from Christ Jesus alone. “The Lamb is the light thereof.”

Another meaning of light in Scripture is knowledge. Ignorance is darkness. Now, in heaven they need no candle, neither light of the sun, because they receive light enough from Christ,

Christ being the fountain of all they know. I think it is Dr. Dick who speaks about the enjoyments of heaven, consisting very likely in going from star to star, and viewing the works of God in different portions of his universe, admiring the anatomy of living creatures, studying geology, ferrying across the waving of ether, and voyaging from world to world. I do not believe in such a heaven for a moment. I do not conceive it a worthy employment for immortal spirits, and, if there were nothing else to make me think so, the text would be enough. "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it." There is no need of the works of God to give instruction to its inhabitants, "for the glory of God did lighten it." The glory, not of God's works, but of God's Son, is their glorious light.

*"The spacious earth and spreading flood
Proclaim the wise and powerful God;
And thy rich glories from afar
Sparkle in every rolling star.
But in his looks a glory stands,
The noblest labour of thy hands;
The pleasing lustre of his eyes
Outshines the wonders of the skies."*

They need no light of the sun and moon where Jesus is. However well the sun and moon may tell of God, we shall not want them from day to day to send forth their line throughout all the earth, and their word unto the end of the world, for the glory of Christ will teach us all we wish to learn; and beholding the unveiled glory of God will be better far than prying into the works of nature, even though we had an angel's power of discovery. We shall know more of Christ in five minutes. I ween, when we get to heaven, than we shall know in all our years on earth. Dr. Owen was a master of theology, but the smallest

child who goes to heaven from a Sunday-school -school knows more of Christ after being in heaven five minutes, than Dr. Owen did. John Calvin searched very deep, and Augustine seemed to come to the very door of the great secret; but Augustine and Calvin would be but children on the first form there—I mean if they knew no more than on earth. Oh! what manifestations of God there will be! Dark dealings of providence which you never understood before will then be seen without the light of a candle or of the sun. Many doctrines puzzled you, and you could not find the clue to the labyrinth of mystery; but there all will be simple and plain, so that the wayfaring man may run and understand it. You have had many experiences and tossings to and fro, and you have felt your ignorance, your corruption and weakness; but there you shall see to the very bottom of human nature, you shall understand the virulence of man's depravity, and the heights of God's sovereignty, the marvels of his electing love, and the magnificence of his divine power, by which he has made us to be partakers of the divine nature.

*“There you shall see and hear and know
All you desired or wished below,
And every power find sweet employ
In that eternal world of joy.”*

And this knowledge, I say, shall not come from any inferior agent, but from the Lord God who shall be your glory, and from Jesus Christ himself who shall teach you all truth.

I must not dwell longer on this point except to say this one thing, that light also means manifestation. “Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are

wrought in God." Light manifests. In this world it doth not yet appear how great we must be made. God's people are a hidden people—their life is hid with Christ in God. They possess God's secret, and that secret other men cannot discover. Christ in heaven is the great revealer of God's mind; and when he gets his people there, he will touch them with the wand of his own love, and change them into the image of his manifested glory. They were poor and wretched, but what a transformation! Their rags drop off and they are acknowledged as princes. They were stained with sin and infirmity, but one touch of his finger, and they are bright as the sun, and clear as crystal, transformed even as he was upon Mount Tabor, whiter than any fuller can make them. They were ignorant and weak on earth, but when he shall teach them, they shall know even as they are known. They were buried in dishonour, but they are raised in glory; they were sown in the grave in weakness, but they are raised in power; they were carried away by the hands of remorseless Death, but they arise to immortality and life. Oh! what a manifestation. Light is sown for the righteous, and Christ is the sacred rain that brings the harvest above ground. The righteous are always pearls, but they are hidden, as it were, in the oyster now, and Christ brings them forth. They were always diamonds, they were far away in the Golconda of sin; but Christ hath fetched them up from the deep mines. They were always stars, but they were hidden behind the clouds; Christ, like a swift wind, hath blown the clouds away, and now they shine like stars in the firmament for ever and ever. In this sense Christ is the light of heaven, because it is through him that the true and real character of all the saints has been manifested.

Come, my soul, take wing a moment—it is not far for thee to fly—mount thee and walk the golden streets, and as thou walkest thou shalt see nothing but Jesus glorified. Come up to

the throne, and thou shalt see Christ on it. Sit down and listen to the song, Christ is the theme; go to the banquet, Christ is the meat; mingle with the dancers, Christ is their joy; make thou one in their great assemblies, and Christ is the God they worship:—

*“‘Worthy the Lamb that died,’ they cry,
 ‘To be exalted thus:’
 ‘Worthy the Lamb,’ our lips reply,
 ‘For he was slain for us.’”*

III. Let us turn to our last thought; and here I hope we can speak experimentally, whereas on the other two points we could only speak by faith in the promise of God. THE HEAVENLY MAN'S STATE MAY BE SET FORTH IN THESE WORDS.

First, then, even on earth the heavenly man's joy does not depend upon the creature. Brethren, in a certain sense we can say to-day that “the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it.” We love and prize the happy brightness which the sun scatters upon us; as for the moon, who does not admire the fair moonlight when the waves are silvered, and silent nature wears the plumage of the dove; but we do not need the sun or the moon, we can do without them; for the Sun of Righteousness has risen with healing beneath his wings. There are brothers and sisters here this morning who are very happy, and yet it is long since they saw the sun. Shut up in perpetual night, through blindness, they need not the light of the sun, nor of the moon, for the Lord God is their glory—Christ is their light. If our eyes should be put out, we could say, “Farewell, sweet light, farewell, bright sun and moon—we prize ye well, but we can do without ye—Christ Jesus is to us as the light of seven days.”

As we can do without these two most eminent creatures, so we can be happy without other earthly blessings. Our dear friends are very precious to us—we love our wife and children, our parents and our friends, but we do not need them. May God spare them to us! but if they were taken, it does not come to a matter of absolute need, for you know, beloved, there is many a Christian who has been bereft of all, and he thought, as the props were taken away one after another, that he should die of very grief; but he did not die, his faith surmounted every wave, and he still rejoices in his God. I know that at the thought of those dear ones who are taken from you, the sluices of your grief are drawn up, but still I hope you will not be so false to Christ as to deny what I now say, that his presence can make amends for all losses, that the smilings of his face will make a paradise so sweet, that no sorrow or sighing shall be heard in it.

*“Thee, at all times, will I bless;
Having thee, I all possess;
How can I bereaved be,
Since I cannot part with thee?”*

It is a very happy thing to be placed in circumstances where one knows no lack of bread—to have a house, a comfortable home, and sufficiency for our family is very pleasant: but O dear friends, if it comes to actual need, the Christian does not want this, he needs no sun nor moon even here. Look at the chosen sons of poverty—they toil from morning to night and never get a single inch beyond, just living from hand to mouth, but they are happy, ah! some of them infinitely happier than the rich man with all his sumptuous faring, and the fine linen with which he wraps himself. Why there have been men reduced all but to beggary who have rejoiced far more in their poverty than others in their wealth: we have seen some of God's

saints in the work-house house, or lingering in a dark ill-furnished almsroom, and we have heard them speak as joyously about God and their state as if they were dwelling in mansions or palaces. Yes, many a poor child of God has learned to sing—

*“I would not change my bless'd estate
For all the world calls good or great;
And while my faith can keep her hold,
I envy not the sinner's gold.”*

For “this city hath no need of the sun, nor of the moon, to shine in it, for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.” Health too—who can prize it enough? When stretched upon the bed of sickness, then we begin to know how priceless a boon was a sound body, but ah! the Christian, though lie loves health, can do without it. I have heard of Christians who have been blind, and who have been bedridden and have not stirred from their bed for many years, who could scarcely lift their hands through paralysis, and who never had stood upon their feet for years, through some stroke of God's hand, yet have they delighted themselves in the Lord. They have laid there ill-nursed, ill-cared for—simply living to illustrate to what degree a mortal man may become a mass of suffering and a prodigy of grief, and yet as I have sometimes stood by such bed-sides, I have heard more rapturous expressions concerning present joy and future prospects, than from God's strongest saints in their healthiest hours. The dying girl, when consumption has paled her cheek and taken the flesh from off her poor aching bones, has nevertheless appeared in a sacred majesty of might which showed me that she needed no moon nor sun to lighten her, no health nor strength to give her spirits, for the presence of Christ made her conqueror in the extremity of weakness, and victorious in the grim presence of

Death itself. The Christian then, dear friends, leans upon the arm of God—he has pressed through the crowd of creatures—he has bidden them all retire that he might live nearer to his all-sufficient Lord, and if when he has reached his Lord the creatures turn their backs and go away, he saith, “There, ye may all go; I have him now; I embrace him now; he hath kissed me with the kisses of his lips; ye may spit on me and ye will; now he has spoken softly to me ye may curse me if ye please; now that he has told me I am his and he is mine, even my father and mother may forsake me, for the Lord hath taken me up.” Yes, the heavenly man, even before he gets to heaven hath no need of the sun nor of the moon, for the glory of God doth lighten him.

We finish by observing that such a man, however, has great need of Christ—he cannot get on without Christ. O beloved, if the sun were struck from the spheres, what a poor, dark, dreary world this would be. We should go groping about it, longing for the grave; but that would be nothing compared with our misery if Christ were taken away. O Christian man, what would you do without a Saviour? We should be of all men the most miserable—we who have once known him. Ah! you who do not know Christ, you can get on pretty well without him, like a poor slave who has never known liberty, and rests content in bondage. The bird in its cage, which never did fly over the fields, which has been born in the cage, can be pretty easy; but after we have once stretched our wings, and once know what liberty means, we cannot be shut out from our Lord. As the dove mourns itself to death when its mate is taken away, so should we if Christ were gone. We can do without light, without friendship, without life, but we cannot live without our Saviour. Oh! to be without Christ! My soul, what wouldst thou do in the world without him, in the midst of its temptations and its cares? What wouldst thou do in the morning without him, when thou wakest up and lookest forward to the day’s battle? What

wouldst thou do if he did not put his hand upon thee, and say, "Fear not, I am with thee?" And what wouldst thou do at night, when thou comest home jaded and weary, if there were no prayer, no door of access between thee and Christ? What should we do without Christ in our trials, our sicknesses? What should we do when we come to die, with no one to make our dying bed feel soft as downy pillows are? Oh! if the infidel's laugh has truth in it, it may well ring bitterly in our ears, for it were a bitter truth to us. No Christ! Then to die indeed is so dreadful. To have such high hopes, and to have them all blasted; such high, loud boastings, and to have our mouths stopped for ever! But, beloved, we need not suppose such a thing, for we know that our Redeemer liveth, and we know that he never forsakes the work of his own hand. Married as he is to our souls, he will never sue out a divorce against any one of his dear people, but he will hold, and keep, and bless us till we die; and we on our part will confess of our spiritual life that the Lamb is the light thereof. Of every day and every night, of every joy and every sorrow, the Lamb has been until now our light, and shall be till we die.

If this be so, how dark is the case of those who do not know the Lamb! In what misery and ignorance do you grope who do not know the Saviour! Would you know Christ, would you have the happiness of resting upon his bosom? Trust him, then, for whosoever trusteth him is saved. To trust Christ is that saving faith which brings the soul out of condemnation. "He that believeth on him is not condemned." Trust thou, guilty as thou art, trust thou to his atonement, and it shall wash thee; trust to his power, it shall prevail for thee; trust to his wisdom, it shall protect thee; trust to his heart, it shall love thee, world without end.

Amen.

SIXTY-THREE
THE BARRIER

SERMON GIVEN ON MARCH 27, 1881

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 21:27

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 27

*“And there shall in no wise enter into it any
thing that defileth, neither whatsoever
worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but
they which are written in the Lamb’s book of
life.” —*

REVELATION 21:27.

THE text refers to the glorified church of our Lord Jesus Christ. That perfected company of the elect and sanctified is set forth in this wonderful chapter under the image of a city descending “from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” Her work-day dress all laid aside, the bride appears in garments of needlework and raiment of

wrought gold. The militant church, the church of the present day, is comparable to a tent, and is well imaged by the tabernacle in the wilderness: it is lit up within by the glory of God's presence, and covered without by the fiery cloudy pillar of his eternal providence; but yet to the eyes of men it is mean and inconsiderable, for verily it doth not yet appear what it shall be. By-and-by this same church, which to-day is likened unto a structure of curtains readily removed from place to place, shall become a city, fixed, permanent, high-walled, and compact together, a "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." The discomforts and trials of the desert life shall be exchanged for the quiet and comfort of a city dwelling. There shall be nothing of the wilderness about the church triumphant; it shall be a right royal abode, the metropolis of the universe, the palace of the great King. Everything that is lustrous, pure, precious, majestic shall be there. Rare and priceless things which are now the peculiar treasure of kings shall be the common possession of all the sanctified. The church shall be no longer despised, but shall sit as a queen among the nations, while at her feet they shall heap up all their glory and honour. In that church there shall remain nothing for which men shall reproach her, but everything shall be manifested in her for which they shall do her honour; her very streets to be trodden on shall be of pure gold like unto transparent glass, and her lowest course of stones snail be of jasper. Everything about the perfected church shall be the best of the best: she shall be recognized as being the fairest among women, the bride, the Lamb's wife, the crown and flower of the universe. We read the sparkling figures of John's vision as emblems of moral and spiritual excellence, but we doubt not that, beyond the spiritual riches of the church all materialism will also be at her disposal, and the restored creation shall bring her choicest beauties to adorn the chosen bride of the Lamb.

We have said that the glorified church will be the crown of the new creation, and it is into the new heavens and the new earth that she is represented as coming down from God. He that sitteth upon the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." The creation which is round about us at this hour waxeth old, and is ready to vanish away. Wise men tell us that there are evident preparations in the bowels of the earth for a burning up of the earth and of all the works of men that are upon it, for its centre is an ocean of fire. God shall but speak, and as once the waters leaped upon the world and utterly destroyed all things that were upon it, so shall he call to the waves of flame and they shall rise from their hidden furnaces to melt all things with their fervent heat. Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. The former things shall have passed away, and a new creation shall dwell beneath the new heavens, filling up the new earth; and the flower and perfection of the new creation shall be the church of the living God in her full bloom and perfectness. Even now the regenerate are a kind of first fruits of God's creatures, the forerunners of the renewed universe; but then they shall be its centre and glory. The new birth is the beginning of the new creation: we lead the way, even we who are the church of the firstborn, but the whole creation groans to follow us so as to be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

It is the glorified church, I say, that is here spoken of, and hence the text may be said to refer to heaven, for at the present moment the nucleus of the glorified church is in heaven, and from heaven every defiled thing must be shut out. Hence, too, it may refer to the kingdom of the millennial age, when the saints will reign with Christ upon the earth for a thousand years, when even upon this battle-field our conquering Leader shall be crowned with victory, and where his blood was shed

his throne shall be set up, for among the sons of men shall he triumph, even among those that spat in his face. The text may also be read as including the eternal world of future bliss, for of that glorious, endless, undefiled inheritance the church glorified will be the possessor, but out of her shall long before have been gathered all things that offend, and them that do iniquity. From heaven and from all heavenly joys and states sin must be shut out. Into the perfected church there shall never enter anything that defileth, and from all its honours and rewards every polluted person is shut out by immutable decree.

I should like you for a minute or two to think of that perfected church as she is described in this chapter, for it is a description worthy of the profoundest study. What glory will surround the risen saints in their capacity as the city of God: "having the glory of God," saith the eleventh verse. What a glory of glories is this! Even now, my brethren and sisters, you that are in Christ possess the grace of God, but you shall by-and-by conspicuously shine with the glory of God. At present you share in the dishonour which falls to the lot of your Master and his cause among a wicked generation, but then you shall share in the glory which is the reward of the travail of his soul. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." How glorious will that church be whose light shall be the presence of God himself,—light in which the nations of them that are saved shall rejoice. O my God, write my name among them! And to that end write me among thy persecuted saints below. Well may we be content to endure what little of shame shall come upon the church militant on earth if we may participate in the honour of the church glorified above, for this is a glory which excelleth, "having the glory of God."

The city is described as exhibiting great massiveness, for

the length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. It is a solid square, perfect and compact:

*"Thy walls are made of precious stones,
Thy bulwarks diamond square."*

What a church will the church of God be in those happier days! Now she is as a rolling thing, removed as readily as a shepherd's tent; but then she shall stand firm as a cube which rests upon its base. We watch the church of God sometimes with trepidation and alarm, for though we know that the gates of hell shall not prevail against her, yet her feebleness makes the timid tremble; but in her state after the resurrection there shall remain no signs of feebleness, for that which was sown in weakness shall be raised in power. She shall be a city the like of which hath never been beheld, whose foundation shall be deeper than the depths beneath, and her towers shall reach above the clouds. No institution shall exist so long or flourish so abundantly as the church of the living God. When you think of the massiveness of the church of God, settled in her place by the Almighty himself who hath established her, remember at the same time her vastness, for a multitude that no man can number shall be comprehended among her inhabitants: her census shall prove her citizens to be as the stars of heaven for multitude. Her stones shall not lie cast about as a little heap, but from her vast foundation the living stones shall rise course upon course, twelve foundations of jewels, till "the mountain of the Lord's house shall be exalted above the hills." I say again, write my name down among the dwellers in the great city! What higher honour can I crave than to have it said, "this man was born there"? To be numbered with princes, to be named with emperors, what of it! Your golden fleece, and silken garter, and grided star are all poor toys; true glory lies in being part and

parcel of the church, to-day despised and rejected of men, which shall ere long look forth fair as the sun, and astonish the world with the brightness of her rising. Ambition's self needs ask no more than citizenship in the heavenly Jerusalem.

The perfection of the church is set forth in her being foursquare, her value in the sight of God by her walls being composed of the rarest gems, and her delights in the variety of the sparkling jewels which bedeck her, there being scarcely one precious stone omitted of those that were known to Orientals, while some are mentioned which are scarcely known to us at all. All manner of joys and treasures and pleasures and delights, every form and shade of excellence, virtue, and bliss shall belong to the perfected ones when their number and character shall be complete, and they shall be comparable to the city of God.

The safety and quiet of the church is set forth by her gates for ever open. In times of war the city gates are fast closed, but for the New Jerusalem there will remain no fear of foe, no need to set a watch against an invader. Gog and Magog will be slain, and Armageddon's battle fought and finished, and unbroken rest shall be the portion of the glorified. Write my name among them, O my God, and permit me to enter into thy rest.

Best of all, remark how holy will the church be. She shall have no temple within her walls, for this simple reason, that she shall be all temple; she shall have no spot reserved for sacred uses, because all shall be "holiness unto the Lord." The divine presence shall be in all and over all, and this shall be the joy of her joy, "The glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Brethren, the glory of the church even here below is the presence of God in her midst, but what will that presence be when it shineth forth in noonday brightness? when spirits strengthened for the vision shall endure with transport the full splendour of Jehovah's throne? Tongue cannot tell the

glory, for thought cannot conceive it. Write my name among the blessed who shall see Jehovah's face. O thou living God, my soul thirsteth after thee. To dwell in thy presence is the summit of the soul's delight; to be with thee where thou art, and to behold thy glory, is the heaven of heaven. To what beyond this can thoughts aspire?

I. It being declared that the glorified church is to be all this, and a great deal more, of which we cannot now speak particularly, we may well long to enter within her gates of pearl. But what saith the text? I beseech you listen attentively to the solemn sound of THE WORD OF EXCLUSION— "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatever worketh abomination, or maketh a tie." Listen, I say, to this word of exclusion, though it sounds like a death-knell in my ears. Learn that it can be abundantly justified to the conscience of all thoughtful men; learn that your own soul, if it be honest, must set its seal to the sentence of exclusion. This is no arbitrary decree, it is a solemn declaration to which all holy spirits give their willing assent and consent; an ordinance of which even the excluded themselves shall admit the justice.

For, first, it is not meet that so royal and divine a corporation as the glorified church of God should be ruined by defilement. God forbid that "her light, which is like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal," should ever be dimmed by the breath of sin. How beautiful was this fair world in the early morning of her creation, when the dew of her youth glistened upon her, and the sunlight of God made her face to shine. Keep watch and ward, ye shining ones, that this beauty be not marred! Let watchers and holy ones fly round the new-made world to drive far hence the apostate spirit and his fellows who kept not their first estate. Sad was the hour when with dragon wing the fallen spirit descended into Eden, advanced to mother Eve, and whispered in her ear the fell

temptation. Oh, ye seraphs, would God your fiery swords had kept out the arch-deceiver, that this world might never have fallen, that we might have dwelt here amidst sunny glades, by pure rivers rippling o'er sands of gold, a holy and happy race, making every hill and vale vocal with the praise of God. Now, O earth, thou art a field of blood, but thou mightest have been a garden of delights; now art thou one vast cemetery, where all the dust was once a part of the living fabric of mortal men; but thou mightest have been as the firmament filled with stars, all shining to their Creator's praise. Alas that Eden should now remain only as a name,— gone as a vision of the night! Inasmuch as we could heartily wish that evil had never entered into the primeval world, we earnestly deprecate the idea that it should ever defile the new. Shall those new heavens ever look down with amazement upon the flight of a rebellious spirit, flying, beneath their serene azure, on an errand of destruction? Shall the jewelled walls of the thrice holy city be overleaped by an enemy of the king who is there enthroned? Shall the serpent leave his horrid trail upon the heavenly Eden, twice made of the Lord? God forbid! The purity of a world twice made, the perfection of the church of the regenerate, the majesty of the presence of God, all demand that every sinful thing should be excluded. All heaven and heavenly things cry, "Write the decree and make it sure, there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth." Grave it as in eternal brass, and let omnipotence go with the decree to execute it with the utmost rigour, for it would be horrible indeed if a second time evil should destroy the work of God. Into the church of the firstborn above the breath of iniquity must not enter. It cannot be that the work which cost the Redeemer's blood should yet be defiled. The eternal purpose of the Father, and the love of the Spirit, forbid that the Lord's own perfected church should be invaded by any unholy thing.

Brethren, there can be no entrance of evil into the kingdom of God, for it is the very essence of the bliss of the glorified church that evil should be excluded. Imagine for a moment that the decree of our text were reversed or suspended, and that it were allowed that a few unregenerate men and women should enter into the glorified church of God. Suppose, in addition, that those few should be of the gentler sort of sinners, not those who would profanely blaspheme the name of God, nor openly break the eternal Sabbath, but a few who are indifferent to God's glory, and cold and formal in his praise. How could heaven bear with these? These who are neither cold nor hot are sickening both to Christ and to his people, and must they endure the nausea of their society? Why, as in a living body the existence of a dead piece of bone breeds fret, and pain, and disease, so would the presence of these few defiling ones cause I know not what of disquietude and sorrow. It must not be. Love to the saints demands that they be no more vexed by sin or sinners. Pity, mercy, yea, even the partiality of kindred love dare not ask that it may be. All heaven is up in arms at the supposition. Holy spirits are alarmed at the idea that they should be again tempted by the presence of evil. Fast bar the gates of pearl and never open them again, ye spirits, rather than that there should come upon that pure street of transparent gold a toot that will not walk in the ways of God's commandments, or the halls of Zion be disgraced by a single spirit that shall refuse to love the holy and exalted name. Heaven were not heaven if it were possible for evil of any sort to enter there. Therefore, stand firm, O dread decree, for it would be cruelty to saints and destruction to heaven that there should in anywise enter into it anything that defileth.

Furthermore, let me beg you to consider that there is an impossibility of any defiled, sinful, unrenewed person ever entering into the body corporate of the glorified church of God

— an impossibility within the persons themselves. Look, good sirs, the reason why wicked men cannot be happy is not alone because God will not let rebellion and peace dwell together, but because they will not let themselves be happy. The sea cannot rest because it is the sea, and the sinner cannot be quiet because he is a sinner. How could you, O natural, unregenerate man, ever enter into the kingdom of heaven as you are? You are not capable of it; it is not possible to you. Holiness has in it no attractions for you, since you love sin and the wages of it. You do not know God, and cannot see him; for this is the privilege of the pure in heart, and of them alone. You live in a world where everything has been made by the great Lord, and yet you do not perceive his hand, so great is your blindness. Shall blind men grope through the streets of the New Jerusalem? You are unacquainted with the simplest elements of spiritual things; for they can only be spiritually discerned, and you have no spiritual faculty. You are blind and deaf, yea, dead to God and heavenly things:— you know you are. Well, then, of what avail would it be that you should enter the spiritual realm, supposing it to be a place? for if you were admitted into the place called heaven, you would not be a partaker of the state of heaven, and it is the state of mind and character which is, after all, the essence of the joy. To be in a heavenly place and not in a heavenly condition would be worse than hell, if worse can be. What are songs to a sad heart? Such would heaven be to an unrenewed mind. The element of glory would destroy rather than bless an unrenewed mind. It is as though you saw before you a blazing furnace, in which happy creatures disported themselves among the flames, bathing themselves in the white heat, leaping in rapture amid the rising sparks; for they are children of the flame, who drink in fire, and find it life. Imagine yourself to be a poor fly such as you hear buzzing on the window-pane; and you ask to enter into the glow of the furnace, thinking to be as merry

as the fire-children. Keep back. Why tempt your doom? You will die soon enough; why ask to perish more quickly? No place would be so dreadful to a sinner as the place where God is most openly manifest. That holy element, which is the habitat of the new-born soul, would be the grave, the everlasting prison-house of an unholy soul could it enter there. To the wicked the day of the Lord is darkness, and not light, and the glory of the Lord is terror, and not bliss. Oh, unconverted hearer, they sing in heaven; but in their songs your ear would find no delight. They worship God in heaven; but as divine worship is irksome to you, even if it be kept up for an hour or so below, what would it be to dwell for ever and ever in the world to come in the midst of hallelujahs? O soul defiled with sin, you are incapable of heaven. The Roman Emperor Caligula, in his madness, made his horse first-consul of Rome; but his horse could not be a magistrate; it could not judge or govern, whatever the emperor might decree; though he fed it upon gilded oats from an ivory manger, it was a horse and nothing more. Even so, if a man be unregenerate, and unbelieving, we may do what we will with him, but he cannot rise to spiritual joys, and if we could even bid him come into heaven, still he would remain what he was, incapable of the joy and bliss which God hath prepared for them that love him. So standeth it a fact in the very essence and nature of things, that there shall in no wise enter into the realm of the spiritual, the kingdom of the true, the land of the blessed, the home of the perfected, anything that defileth. It cannot come there from incapacity within itself.

Let me add that our own hearts forbid that evil should so enter. As I mused on this text I supposed myself to be defiled with sin, yet standing outside the pearl gates of heaven. Then I said within myself, "If I might enter there defiled as I am, would I do so?" and my heart answered, "No, I would not if I might. How could I blot such brightness and spoil such happi-

ness?" Suppose myself infected to-day with a deadly fever—an incurable typhus, which would bring death to all that touched me. The blast is pitiless, and the snow is falling, and I stand shivering at the door of one of your houses longing for shelter. I see inside the room your little children, sporting in full health: shall I venture among them? I long to escape from the cold without; but if I should enter your room I should bring to you fever, and death to your innocent little ones and to yourselves, and thus turn your happiness into misery. I would turn away and brave the storm, and sooner die than bring such desolation into a friend's abode. And well might any honest spirit say at sight of the perfect family above, "Nay, if I might, I would not be admitted into a perfect heaven while yet I might defile it, and spread the fell contagion of moral evil." You know, brethren, how a few rags from the East have sometimes carried a plague into a city; and if you were standing at the quay when a plague-laden ship arrived you would cry, "Burn those rags; do anything with them, but do keep them away from the people. Bring not the pest into a vast city, where it may slay its thousands!" So do we cry, "Great God, forbid it that anything that defileth should enter into thy perfected church! We cannot endure the thought thereof." Draw your swords, ye angels; stand in your serried ranks, ye seraphim, and smite every defiled one that would force a passage within the gates of pearl. It must be so: "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth."

The fiat of God has gone forth, and the fiery sword is set at the gate of the new Eden. Into the first paradise there came the serpent; into the second never shall the subtle tempter enter. Into the first paradise there came sin, and God was driven from it as well as man; but into the second there shall never come anything that approximates to sin or falsehood; but the Lord

God shall dwell there for ever, and his people shall dwell there with him. Thus much, then, upon the word of exclusion.

II. I desire, as I continue this meditation, in the power of the Holy Spirit, not so much to preach as to think inwardly, and ask you to think with me, of **THAT WORD OF EXCLUSION WORKING WITHIN THE SOUL**,— within my soul, within yours. It sits in judgment upon me, and it chastens me. It strikes home to my conscience, and rouses me to self-examination. Its voice is solemn, and strikes heavily upon the ear, as we remember its wide sweep and comprehensive breadth— “There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth.” No person who defiles, no fallen spirit, or sinful man can enter. And as no person, so no tendency, leaning, inclination, or will to sin can gain admission. No wish, no desire, no hunger towards that which is unclean shall ever be found in the perfect city of God. Nor even a thought of evil can be conceived there, much less a sinful act performed. Nothing shall ever be done within those gates of pearl contrary to the perfect law, nor anything imagined in opposition to spotless holiness. Consider such purity, and wonder at it: the term “any thing that defileth” includes even an idea, a memory, a thought of evil. Thoughts that flit through the mind as birds through the air that never roost or build a nest— even such shall never glance across the skies of the new creation. It is altogether perfect! And, mark well, that no untruth can enter— “neither whatsoever maketh a lie.” Nothing can enter heaven which is not real; nothing erroneous, mistaken, conceited, hollow, professional, pretentious, unsubstantial, can be smuggled through the gates. Only truth can dwell with the God of truth. These are sweeping and searching words,— no evil, nothing that works to evil; no falsehood, nothing that works to falsehood, can ever enter into the triumphant church of God. O my soul, my soul, how bears this upon thee? Cuts it not to the very quick? For how art thou to

enter, defiled as thou art, and so diseased with falsehood of one sort or another?

Well may we be aroused when we remember what defiled and defiling creatures we have been in the days of our unregeneracy. Brethren, let us not shrink from the humbling contemplation. Come down from your high places and see the horrible pit in which you lie by nature. Think of your past lives, I pray you, of those days in which ye found pleasure in walking after the flesh. I call on you to remember the sins of your youth, and your former transgressions, of thought, word, and deed. If they are shut out who defile, and are defiled, where are you? where are you? For these sins of ours, though they were committed years ago, are none the less sinful to day; they are as fresh to God as if we perpetrated them this very moment. Thou art still red-handed, O sinful man, though thy crime was worked some twenty years ago. Thou art black, O sinner, still, though it be fifty years ago that thy chief sin was committed; for time has no bleaching power upon a crimson sin. The guilt of an old offence is as fresh as though it were wrought but yester-morn. Our sins in themselves make us unclean and unfit for holy company, and, alas, they are many. Our sins have left a second defilement on us, by creating the tendency to do the like again. Is there one among us that has sinned who does not know that he is all the more likely to sin again? Since after once being drawn aside by sin there are stronger draggings in the same way, sin once committed becomes a fountain of defilement. The stream in which the fish has sported will be sought by it again in its season, and the swallow will return to its old nest; even so will the mind return to its folly. Ay, so it is; and if everything that defileth is shut out from the holy city, my God, my God, am not I shut out too?

Bethink you that not only does actual sin shut men out of heaven, but this text goes to the heart by reminding us that we

have within us inbred sin, which would defile us speedily, even if we were now clean of positive transgression. The fount from which actual sin comes is within every unrenewed bosom. How can you and I enter heaven while there is unholy anger in us? The best of men are too apt to retain an unhallowed quickness of temper, which under certain circumstances worketh wrath. There shall in no wise enter into heaven a hasty temper, or a quick imperious spirit, or a malicious mind; for these defile. In certain persons there is no quickness of spirit, but there is a cold, chill obstinacy; so that having once resolved, though the resolve be evil, they stand to it doggedly and cannot be moved. Like obstinate mules, they can scarcely be driven; blows cannot stir them from their purpose. Disobedient obstinacy cannot enter the kingdom: my hearers, are you under its dominion? And, oh, there is in all of us a lusting after evil of some sort or other. Only place us in certain conditions, and the flesh longs after forbidden things, and though we chide ourselves and check the longing, yet is there not within us a relish for the sweet stolen morsels of transgression? We could weep our eyes out when we discover what a palate for pleasurable sin our old nature still retains; yea, a longing for the very sin of which we most bitterly repent and from which we most eagerly long to be delivered. How can we hope to enter heaven if there be these appetites in us? They are there, and they defile! What can we do? There, too, is that vile thing called "pride." Why, some of us cannot be trusted with a pennyworth of success, but we are exalted above measure. Some of God's children cannot have ten minutes' fellowship with Christ but they must needs put on their fine feathers and crow right lustily because they feel themselves to be nearing absolute perfection. Alas for the pride of our hearts, and the pollution which comes of it! How can such vain creatures be admitted among the glorified? Nor is this all; for sloth preys on many, and tempts them to shun God's

service, and especially to shun the cross of Christ. Sloth is a rust which has a sadly defiling power: we gather moth and mildew from inaction. Never is a man pure who is not zealous in the service of God. We rot to corruption if we lie still; how, then, shall we be admitted within the jewelled city? Ah, look within thy heart, my brother— look steadily beneath the fair film of the surface, and mark the inward evil which it conceals. Judge not thyself alone when at thy best, occupied with thy prayers and praises and almsgivings, but look steadily into thy soul at other times, and thou shalt see a loathsome mass of evil life, a seething corruption moving within thy heart; for evil remaineth even in the regenerate; and this cannot enter heaven. Thank God, it cannot. Even though the word of exclusion staggers me, and sends me back as with a stunning blow, and makes me cry, “Thou shuttest me out, my God, by this thy decree;” yet I feel that if it be so, the decree is right, and just, and good. “There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth.” Amen and amen.

Now, I ask you whether this word of exclusion does not, in you who know its meaning, slay all hope of self-salvation? For, first, here are our past sins, and they defile, and make us defiling. How are we to get rid of them? How can we wash out these polluting blots? Tears! So much salt water thrown away if looked upon as a bath for sin! Good works performed! They are already due to God. How shall future discharge of debts repay the past? O, my God, if I have ever known what sin means, I have also known that it is impossible that its defiling nature should ever be changed, or that the pollution should ever be removed by any efforts of my own. I spoke with one the other day who said that she was seeking salvation by good works. I knew that she had performed self-denying acts of charity, and I asked her whether she felt nearer to the salvation at which she aimed. I knew that I spoke to a sincere, honest person, and her

reply did not surprise me. She answered sadly, "The more I do, the more I feel I ought to do, and I am no nearer to the point I am aiming at." And so it is; the more a sincere heart doth seek to serve God, the more it feels the shortcoming of its service of him; and the more a person seeks after purity by his own efforts, the further he judges himself to be from it. Our standard rises as we rise towards it; our conscience becomes tender in proportion as we obey it; and so, in the nature of things, rest of heart comes not in that manner. Ah, there remaineth not beneath heaven anything that can wash out the defilement of past sin save one only cleansing flood. O sinful man, plunge thy hands into the Atlantic and thou shalt crimson every drop of its tremendous waters, and yet the stain shall be as scarlet as before. No, no, no: it is certain that no man can enter heaven, by reason of his transgression and his sinfulness, except omnipotence shall cleanse him.

But then look at the other part of the difficulty, that is, the making of your own heart pure and clean. How shall this be done? How shall the Ethiopian change his skin and the leopard his spots? Have you tried to master your temper? I hope you have. Have you managed it? Your tendencies this way or that, you have striven against them, I hope, but have you mastered them? I will tell you. You thought you had. You thought you had bound the enemy with strong ropes: you tied him and you fastened him down, and you shut him up in an inner chamber, and you said, "The Philistines be upon thee, Samson." You felt that the champion was vanquished now, but oh how grimly did he laugh at you as the old adversary arose within you, and snapped the bonds, and hurled you to the ground; defeated when you thought that you had won the victory. I cannot overcome myself, nor overcome my sin. I will never cease from the task, God helping me, but apart from the divine Spirit the task is as impossible as to make a world.

III. It seems to me that we may most fitly come to the close of our sermon by thinking of THE WORD OF SALVATION, which just meets the difficulty raised by the sentence,— “There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth.” But, first, my past sin, what of that? There are many who are even now within the church of God above, and we will ask concerning them, “Who are these arrayed in white robes, and whence came they?” We receive the reply, “These are they that have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” “In the blood of the Lamb!” I feel as if I could sing those words. What joy that there should be anything that can take all my stains away,— all without exception, and make me whiter than snow. If Christ be God, if it be true that he did within that infant’s body contain the fulness of the Deity, and if, being thus God and man, he did take away my sin, and in his own body on the tree did bear it, and suffer its punishment for me, then I can understand how my transgression is forgiven and my sin is covered. Short of this my conscience cannot rest. The misty atonements of modern divines cannot calm my conscience; they are not worth the time spent in listening to them, they are cobwebs of the fancy, altogether insufficient to sustain the strain even of the present conscience, much less of the conscience which shall be aroused by the judgment bar of God. But this truth,— Christ instead of me, God himself the offended one in the offender’s place, bowing his august head to vengeance and laying his eternal majesty in the dishonour of a tomb: this is the fulness of consolation. O Lamb of God, my sacrifice, I shall enter heaven now! I shall pass the scrutiny of the infallible watchers. I shall not be afraid of the eyes of fire. I shall be without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing— “Washed in the blood of the Lamb!” This is our first great comfort, brethren— “He that believeth in him is not condemned.” He that believeth in him is justified from all things from which he

could not be justified by the law of Moses. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

But here is the point, there is still no entrance into the holy city so long as there are any evil tendencies within us. This is the work, this is the difficulty, and since these are to be overcome, how is the work to be done? Simple believing upon Christ brings you justification, but you want more than that; you need sanctification, the purgation of your nature, for have we not seen that until our nature itself is purged the enjoyment of heaven must be impossible? There can be no knowledge of God, no communion with God, no delight in God hereafter unless all sin is put away and our fallen nature is entirely changed. Can this be done? It can. Faith in Christ tells us of something else beside the blood. There is a Divine Person,— let us bow our heads and worship him— the Holy Ghost who proceedeth from the Father, and he it is who renews us in the spirit of our minds. When we believe in Jesus, the Spirit enters into the heart, creating within us a new life; that life struggles and contends against the old life, or rather the old death, and as it struggles it gathers strength and grows; it masters the evil, and puts its foot upon the neck of the tendency to sin. Do you feel this Spirit within you? You must be under its power or perish. If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his. I would not have you imagine that in death everything is to be accomplished for us mysteriously in the last solemn article; we are to look for a work of grace in life, a present work, moulding our character among men. Oh, sirs, the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit is not a sort of extreme unction reserved for death-beds, it is a matter for the walks of life and the activities of to-day. I do not know how much is done in the saint during the last minute of his lingering here; but this I know, that in a true believer the conquest of sin is a matter to be begun as soon as he is converted and to be carried on throughout life. If the Spirit of

God dwells in us, we walk not after the flesh but after the spirit, and we mortify the corruptions and lusts of the old man. There must be now a treading under foot of lust and pride, and every evil thing, or these evils will tread us under foot for ever in the future state where character never changes. There must be now a rejection of the lie, a casting out of the false, or we shall be cast out ourselves for ever. There must be now a cry, "O Lord, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." Beloved, it is to this we must come, to be washed in the water which flowed with the blood from Jesus' side, for there must be a purging of nature as well as a removal of actual transgression, or else the inevitable decree, like a fiery sword, will keep the gate of paradise against us. "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie."

O my hearers, suppose we should never enter there! Nay, start not, for the supposition will soon be a fact with many of you except you repent. Suppose we should be in the next world what some of us are now, defiled and untruthful— what remains? That is an awful text in the parable of the virgins—"And the door was shut." You read of those who said, "Lord, Lord, open to us," to whom he answered, "I know you not." You have read of them, will any one of us be among them? Will anyone of us who has a lamp, and is thought to be a virgin soul, be among the shut out ones, on whose ear shall fall the words, "I know you not whence you are." You see you cannot be anywhere else but out unless you are in; and you must be shut out if you are defiled and defiling. Dear heart, this is a question I beg you to look to at once. You do not know how short a time you have left to you in which you may look into it. Some who were here but a Sabbath-day or so ago are now gone from us.

Eleven deaths reported at one church-meeting among our members! We are a dying people; we shall all be gone within a very short time. I charge you by the living God, and as you are dying men and women, see to it that you are not shut out, so as to hear the fatal cry, "Too late, too late, ye cannot enter now." There shall be no purgation in eternity, and no possible way of entering in among the perfected, for it is written, "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth." No crying, "Lord! Lord!" no striving to enter in, no tears, no, not even the pangs of hell itself, shall ever purge the soul so as to make it fit to join with the holy church above, should it pass into the future state uncleansed. Shut out! shut out! O God, may that never be true of anyone among us, for Christ's dear name's sake.

Amen.

REVELATION 22

SIXTY-FOUR
CHRIST THE TREE OF LIFE

SERMON #3251

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 22:2

PUBLISHED 1911.

“In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the Tree of Life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”

REVELATION 22:2

You will remember that in the first Paradise, there was a Tree of Life in the midst of the garden. When Adam had offended and was driven out, God said, “Lest he put forth his hand and take of the Tree of Life and eat, and live forever, therefore the Lord God drove out the man.” It has been supposed, by some, that this Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden was intended to be the means of continuing man in immortality—that his feeding upon

it would have supported him in the vigor of unfailing youth, preserved him from exposure to decay and imparted, by a spiritual regeneration, the seal of perpetuity to his constitution. I do not know about that. If it were so, I can understand the reason why God would not have the first man, Adam, become immortal in the lapsed state he was then in, but ordained that the old nature should die, and that the immortality would be given to a new nature which would be formed under another leadership and quickened by another Spirit.

The text tells us that in the center of the new Paradise, the perfect Paradise of God, from which the saints shall never be driven, seeing it is to be our perpetual heritage, there is also a Tree of Life. But here we translate the metaphor—we do not understand that tree to be literal. We believe our Lord Jesus Christ to be none other than that Tree of Life whose leaves are for the healing of the nations! We can scarcely conceive of any other interpretation, as this seems to us to be so full of meaning and to afford us such unspeakable satisfaction!

At any rate, Beloved, if this is not the absolute purpose of the sublime vision that John saw, it is most certainly true that our Lord Jesus Christ is life from the dead, and life to His own living people. He is All-in-All to them. And by Him and by Him, alone, must their spiritual life be maintained. We are right enough, then, in saying that Jesus Christ is a Tree of Life and we shall so speak of Him in the hope that some may come and pluck of the fruit and eat and live forever! Our desire shall be so to use the sacred allegory that some poor dying soul may be encouraged to lay hold on eternal life by laying hold on Jesus Christ!

First, we shall take the Tree of Life in the winter with no fruit on it. we shall try to show you the Tree of Life budding and blossoming. .

1. And first, my Brothers and Sisters, I have to speak to you of JESUS CHRIST, THE TREE OF LIFE IN THE WINTER.

You will at once anticipate that I mean, by this figure, to describe Jesus in His sufferings, in His dark winter days when He did hang upon the Cross and bleed and die. When He had no honor from men and no respect from anyone—when even God the Father hid His face from Him for a season and He was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. My dear Friends, you will never see the Tree of Life aright unless you first look at the Cross. It was there that this tree gathered strength to bring forth its later fruit. It was there, we say, that Jesus Christ, by His glorious merits and His wondrous work achieved upon the Cross, obtained power to become the Redeemer of our souls and the Captain of our salvation! Come with me, then, by faith, to the foot of the little mound of Calvary, and let us look up and see this thing that came to pass. Let us turn aside as Moses did when the bush burned and see this great sight! It is the greatest marvel that ever earth, or Hell, or Heaven beheld—and we may well spend a few minutes in beholding it.

Our Lord Jesus, the ever-living, the immortal, the eternal, became Man and, being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and died the death of the Cross. That death was not on His own account. His Humanity had no need to die. He might have lived on and have seen no death if so He had willed. He had committed no offense, no sin and, therefore, no punishment could fall upon Him—

“For sins not His own
He died to atone.”

Every pang upon the Cross was substitutionary! And for

you, you sons of men, the Prince of Glory bled, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring you to God! There was no smart for Himself, for His Father loved Him with an Ineffable love. He deserved no blows from His Father's hand, but His smart were for the sins of His enemies—for your sins and mine—that by His stripes we might be healed and that through His wounds, reconciliation might be made with God!

Think, then, of the Savior's death upon the Cross. Mark you well that it was an accursed death. There were many ways by which men might die, but there was only one death which God pronounced to be accursed. He did not say, "Cursed is he that dies by stoning, or by the sword, or by a millstone being fastened about his neck, or by being eaten of worms." But it was written, "Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree." By no other death than that one, which God did single out as the death of the accursed, could Jesus Christ die! Admire it, Believer, that Jesus Christ should be made a curse for us! Admire and love—let your faith and your gratitude blend together.

It was a death of the most ignominious kind. The Roman law subjected only felons to it and I believe not even felons unless they were slaves. A freed Roman must not so die, nor a subject of any of the kingdoms that Rome had conquered—only the slave who was bought and sold in the market could be put to this death. The Jews counted Jesus worthy to be sold as a slave and then they put Him to a slave's death for you.

Besides, they added to the natural scorn of the death their own ridicule. Some passed by and wagged their heads. Some stood still and thrust out their tongues at Him. Others sat down and watched Him there and satisfied their malice and their scorn. He was made the center of all sorts of ridicule and shame. He was the drunkard's song and even they that were crucified with Him reviled Him. And all this He suffered for us! Our sin was shameful and He was made to be a shame for

us. We had disgraced ourselves and dishonored God and, therefore, Jesus was joined with the wicked in His death—and made as vile as they.

Besides, the death was exceedingly painful. We must not forget the pangs of the Savior's body, for I believe, when we begin to depreciate the corporeal sufferings, we very soon begin to drag down the spiritual sufferings, too. It must be a fearful death by which to die, when the tender hands and feet are pierced—and when the bones are dislocated by the jar of erecting the Cross. And when the fever sets in and the mouth becomes hot as an oven, and the tongue is swollen in the mouth, and the only moisture given is vinegar mingled with gall. Ah, Beloved! The pangs that Jesus knew, none of us can guess. We believe that Hart has well described it when he said that He bore—

“All that Incarnate God could bear,
With strength enough, and none to spare.”

You cannot tell the price of griefs, groans, sighs, heart-breaking, soul tearing and rending of the spirit which Jesus had to pay that He might redeem us from our iniquities!

It was a lingering death. However painful a death may be, it is always satisfactory to think that it is soon over. When a man is hanged, after our English custom, or the head is taken from the body, the pain may be great for the instant, but it is soon over and gone. But in crucifixion a man lives so long that when Pilate heard that the Savior was dead, he marveled that He was already dead! I remember hearing a missionary say that he saw a man in Burma crucified, and that he was alive two days after having been nailed to the cross. And I believe there are authenticated stories of persons who have been taken down from the cross after having hung for 48 hours and after all that have had

their wounds healed and have lived for years. It was a lingering death that the Savior had to die.

O my Brothers and Sisters, if you put these items together, they make up a ghastly total which ought to press upon our hearts—if we are Believers, in the form of grateful affection—or if we are unbelievers, provoking us to shame that

And the death of the Lord Jesus Christ for us. He died this death of the condemned. Perhaps most men would feel this to be the worst feature, for if a man shall die by ever so painful a death, if it is accidental, it misses the sting which must come into it if it is caused by law—and especially if it is brought by sin and after sentence has been passed in due form. Now, our Lord Jesus Christ was condemned by the civil and ecclesiastical tribunals of the country to die. And what was more, “it pleased the Lord to bruise Him, He has put Him to grief.” Jesus Christ died without any sin of His own, yet He died a penal death because our sins were counted as His! He took upon Him our iniquities as though they were His own and then, being found in the sinner’s place, He suffered the wrath that was due for sin as if He had been a sinner!

Beloved, I wish it were in my power to set forth Christ Crucified—Christ visibly Crucified among you! Oh, that I could so paint Him that the eyes of your heart could see Him! I wish that I could make you feel the sorrow of His griefs, and sip that bitter cup which He had to drain to the dregs. But if I cannot do this, it shall suffice me to say that that death is the only hope for sinners. Those wounds of His are the gate to Heaven! The smarts and sufferings of Immanuel are the only expiatory Sacrifice for human guilt! O you who would be saved, turn your eyes here! Look unto Him and be you saved, all the ends of the earth. There is life in a look at Him, but there is life nowhere else! Despise Him and you perish. Accept Him and you shall never perish, neither shall all the powers of Hell prevail against

you! Come, guilty Souls! Jesus wants not your tears or your blood—His tears can cleanse you—His blood can purify you! If your heart is not as broken as you would have it, it is His broken heart, not yours, that shall merit Heaven for you! If you cannot be what you could, He was for you what God would have Him to be! God is contented with Him, so be you also contented with Him and come and trust Him! Oh, now may delays be over and difficulties all be solved—and just as you are, without one plea, but that the Savior bled—come to your heavenly Father and you shall be “accepted in the Beloved.”

Thus, then, Jesus Christ hanging on the Cross is the Tree of Life in its winter time.

II. And now let me show you, as I may be enabled, THAT SAME TREE OF LIFE WHEN IT HAS BLOSSOMED AND BROUGHT FORTH FRUIT.

There He stands—Jesus—still the same Jesus—and yet how changed! The same Jesus, but clothed with honor instead of shame, able now to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him. My text says of this tree that it bears “twelve fruits.” I suppose that is intended to signify that a perfect and complete assortment of all supplies for human necessities is to be found in Christ—all sorts of mercies for all sorts of sinners—all kinds of blessings to suit all kinds of necessities. We read of the palm tree, that every bit of it is useful, from its root to its fruit. So is it with the Lord Jesus Christ. There is nothing in Him that we could afford to do without. There is nothing about Jesus that is extraneous or superfluous. You can put Him to use in every part, in every office, in every relationship!

A Tree of Life is for food. Some trees yield rich fruit. Adam in the garden lived only on the fruit of the garden. Jesus Christ is the food of His people—and what dainties they have! What

satisfying food, what plenteous food, what sweet food, what food precisely suitable to all the needs of their souls is Jesus! As for manna, it was angels' food, but what shall I say of Christ? He is more than that, for—

“Never did angels taste above,
Redeeming Grace and dying love.”

Oh, how richly you are fed! The flesh of God's own Son is the spiritual meat of every heir of Heaven. Hungry souls, come to Jesus if you would be fed!

Jesus also gives His people drink. There are some tropical trees which, as soon as they are tapped, yield liquids as sweet and rich as milk, and many drink and are refreshed by them. Jesus Christ's heart blood is the wine of His people. The Atonement which He has perfected by His sufferings is the golden cup out of which they drink and drink again, till their mourning souls are made glad and their fainting hearts are strengthened and refreshed. Jesus gives us the Water of Life, the wines on the lees well refined, the wine and milk, without money and without price. What a Tree of Life to yield us both meat and drink!

Jesus is a Tree of Life yielding clothing, too. Adam went to the fig tree for his garments and the fig leaves yielded him such covering as they could. But we come to Christ and we find not fig leaves, but a robe of Righteousness that is matchless for its beauty, comely in its proportions, one which will never wear out, which exactly suits to cover our nakedness from head to foot and when we put it on makes us fair to look upon, even as Christ Himself! O you who would be dressed till you shall be fit to stand among the courtiers of the skies, come to Jesus and find garments such as you need upon this Tree of Life!

This Tree also yields medicine. “The leaves of the tree

were for the healing of the nations.” Lay a plaster upon any wound and if it is but the plaster of King Jesus, it will heal it! But one promise from His lips, but one leaf from this tree, but one word from His Spirit, but one drop of His blood and this is Heaven’s court-plaster indeed. It is true that there was no balm in Gilead, there was no physician there and, therefore, the hurt of the daughter of Israel’s people was not healed. But there is a Physician at Calvary—and the hurt of the daughter of God’s people shall be healed if she will but fly to Jesus Christ for healing!

And what more shall I say? Is there anything else your spirits can need? O children of God, Christ is All! O you ungodly ones who have been roaming through the world to find the tree that should supply your needs, stop here! This “apple tree among the trees of the woods” is the tree which your souls require! Stay here and you shall have all that you need. For, listen—this tree yields a shelter from the storm. Other trees are dangerous when the tempest howls, but he that shelters beneath the tree of the Lord Jesus shall find that all the thunderbolts of God shall fly by him and do him no injury. He cannot be hurt who clings to Jesus! Heaven and earth should sooner pass away than a soul be lost that hides beneath the boughs of this Tree. And oh, you who have hidden there to shelter from the wrath of God, let me remind you that in every other kind of danger it will also yield you shelter! And if you are not in danger, yet still in the hot days of care you shall find the shade of it to be cool and genial. The spouse in Solomon’s Song said, “I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste.” Get Christ and you have got comfort, joy, peace and liberty—and when the trouble comes, you shall find shelter and deliverance by coming near to Him.

He is the Tree of Life, then, yielding twelve fruits, those fruits being always ripe and always ready, for they ripen every

month, all being free to all who desire them, for the leaves are not for the healing of some, but “for the healing of the nations.” What a large word! Then there are enough of these leaves for the healing of all the nations that shall ever come into the world. Oh, may God grant that none of you may die from spiritual sickness when these leaves can heal you! And may none of you be filling yourselves with the sour grapes of this world, the poisonous grapes of sin, while the sweet fruit of Christ’s love are waiting which would refresh you and satisfy you.

III. And now I have to show you HOW TO GET AT THE FRUIT OF THIS TREE OF LIFE.

That is the main matter. Little does it matter to tell that there is fruit unless we can tell how it can be obtained. I wish that all here really wanted to know the way, but I am afraid many care very little about it. Dr. Payson had once been out to tea with one of his people who had been particularly hospitable to him, and when he was leaving, the doctor said, “Well, now, Madam, you have treated me exceedingly well, but how do you treat my Master?” That is a question I should like to put to some of you. How do you treat my Master? Why, you treat Him as if He were not Christ! As if you did not need Him! But you do need Him. May you find Him soon, for when you come to die, you will need Him then, and perhaps then you may not find Him.

Well, the way to get the fruit from this Tree is by faith. That is the hand that plucks the golden apples! Can you believe? That is the thing. Can you believe that Jesus is the Son of God, that He died upon the Cross? “Yes,” you say, “I believe that.” Can you believe that in consequence of His sufferings, He is able to save? “Yes,” say you. Can you believe that He will save you? Will you trust Him to save you? If so, you are saved! If your soul comes to Jesus, and says, “My Lord, I believe in

You, that You are able to save to the uttermost, and now I throw myself upon You." That is faith!

When Mr. Andrew Fuller was going to preach before an Association, he rode to the meeting on his horse. There had been a good deal of rain and the rivers were very much swollen. He got to one river which he had to cross. He looked at it and he was half afraid of the strong current, as he did not know the depth. A farmer who happened to be standing by, said, "It is all right, Mr. Fuller, you will get through it all right, Sir. The horse will keep its feet." Mr. Fuller went in and the water got up to the girth, and then up to the saddle—and he began to get uncomfortably wet. Mr. Fuller thought he had better turn round and he was going to do so when the same farmer shouted, "Go on, Mr. Fuller! Go on! I know it is all right!" And Mr. Fuller said, "Then I will go on. I will go by faith." Now, Sinner, it is very like that with you. You think that your sins are so deep that Christ will never be able to carry you over them! But I say to you—"It is all right, Sinner. Trust Jesus and He will carry you through Hell, itself, if that is necessary! If you had all the sins of all the men that have ever lived, and they were all yours—if you could trust Him, Jesus Christ would carry you through the current of all that sin! It is all right, Man! Only trust Christ. The river may be deep, but Christ's love is deeper. It is all right, Man! Do not let the devil make you doubt my Lord and Master! He is a liar from the beginning and the father of lies, but my Master is faithful and true! Rest on Him and all will be well. The waves may roll, the river may seem to be deeper than you thought it to be—and rest assured it is much deeper than you know it to be—but the almighty arm of Jesus—that strong arm that can shake the heavens and the earth and move the pillars thereof as Samson moved the pillars of Gaza's gates—that strong arm can hold you up and bear you safely through if you do but

cling to it, and rest on it. O Soul, rest in Jesus and you are saved!"

Once again. If at the first you do not seem to get the fruit from this Tree, shake it by prayer. "Oh," you say, "I have been praying." Yes, but a tree does not always drop its fruit at the first shake you give it. Shake it again, Man! Give it another shake! And sometimes, when the tree is loaded and is pretty firm in the earth, you have to shake it to and fro and, at last, you plant your feet and get a hold of it, and shake it with might and main till you strain every muscle and sinew to get the fruit down! And that is this way to pray. Shake the Tree of Life until the mercy drops into your lap! Christ loves for men to beg hard of Him. You cannot be too importunate! That which might be disagreeable to your fellow creatures when you beg of them, will be agreeable to Christ! Oh, get to your chambers! Get to your chambers, you that have not found Christ! Get to your bedsides, to your little closets and "seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near!"

May the Spirit of God compel you to pray. May He compel you to continue in prayer! Jesus must hear you. The gate of Heaven is open to the sturdy knocker that will not take a denial. The Lord enable you so to plead that at the last, you will be able to say, "You have heard my voice and my supplication. You have inclined Your ear unto me. Therefore will I pray unto You as long as I live."

May God add His blessing to these rambling thoughts, for Jesus sake!

Amen.

SIXTY-FIVE
HEALING LEAVES

MAY 9, 1875

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 22:2

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 21

*"The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the
nations."*

REVELATION 22:2.

WE have in the twenty-first and twenty-second chapters of the Book of the Revelation a very wonderful description of heaven upon earth. I shall not attempt to go into any prophetic explanations as to when this will be fulfilled, but we know this for certain, for we have it in so many words, that the holy city, New Jerusalem, will descend out of heaven from God, and that, in a word, there will be for a time at least a heaven on earth. But inasmuch as heaven, be it where it may, is still heaven, the description of heaven on earth sufficiently avails to reveal to us

in some measure the present joys and blessings of the celestial state. We shall not make any mistake if we read the passage as hundreds of thousands have done before us, and as all common readers will always persist in doing, as a description of the heavenly state as it is at present, for what can come down from heaven but that which is in heaven? The results of the revealed presence of the God of love must be to his saints very much the same at all times; the same glory will be revealed, the same happiness bestowed, the same occupations followed, the same fellowship enjoyed. We may, therefore, consider that we have before us a description of what heaven now is and shall be world without end, save only that the bodies of the saints are not yet raised, and therefore all the minute details may not be fully developed. The glowing metaphors here employed, for we must to a large extent regard the language as figurative, are evidently taken from the Garden of Eden. That was man's first inheritance, and it is a type of his last. That paradise which the first Adam lost the second Adam will regain for us, with added bliss, and superior joy; we shall dwell where a river rolls with placid stream, and compasses a land where there is gold, "and the gold of that land is good, there is bdellium and the onyx stone"; a river watering every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and flowing hard by the tree of life, in the midst of the garden. Yet, though there is a likeness between heaven and Eden, there is a difference too; for the earthly paradise with all its perfections was still of the earth earthy, and the second paradise is, like the Lord from heaven, heavenly and divine. The fatal tree of knowledge of good and evil, hedged about by a solemn threatening, grows not in the garden of the immortals. They have known evil, but they now "know the Lord," and know evil no more. Everything in the diviner paradise is fuller and more abundant. The gold, which in Eden lay in the soil, is used in the heavenly paradise to pave the streets; the river has

no earthly source, but is “a pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb the Lord, who in Eden walked only at solemn intervals “among the trees of the garden in the cool of the day,” has in heaven his tabernacle among men, and dwells among them, while the trees which grew in Eden, and ripened their fruits only in autumn, are succeeded by trees with twelve fruitages in the year.

It has been thought that man would have preserved the immortality of his body by eating of the tree of life in Eden, and that therefore when he sinned he was shut out from it, “lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever.” Some even go so far as to think that the extreme longevity of the antediluvians may have been helped by the remaining influence of that wondrous food upon the constitution of man for many generations. Of that we know nothing, it is all conjecture. It is, however, very customary for expositors to speak of the tree of life in the garden as the sacrament of the primeval age, the eating of whose fruit they conceive to be the grand means of preserving Adam from death. Now, there is a tree of life in heaven, but there is this difference, that it is more accessible— more accessible even than when Adam was in perfection, for if there were but one tree of life in the garden, the garden was certainly divided by the river which flowed in several streams through it, and therefore the tree could not always be easily reached from all parts of the garden. In the passage before us we have the tree of life on either side of the river, which I suppose intends that there were many such trees; though there was only one tree as to its kind, yet many in number. The picture presented to the mind’s eye would appear to be that of a wide street, with a river flowing down the centre, like some of the broader canals of Holland, with trees growing on either side, all of them of the same kind, all called the tree of life. I do not know how we can make the figure out in any other

way. Some have represented the tree as only one, and growing in the bottom of the river, rising out of the water, and so sending boughs on either side, being itself so large as to shade all the city. Such a conception is almost monstrous, and to conceive of many trees of life, all one tree as to quality and nature, growing all along the street, is to present a beautiful image, which can very readily be conceived by the mind. At any rate, to all the inhabitants of heaven the tree of life is equally and perpetually accessible. They may come at it when they may. No cherub's flaming sword stands there to keep them back, but they may always come and eat of its twelve fruitages, and pluck its healing leaves.

*"Joy
Here holds court within its own metropolis.
And through its midst the crystal river flows
Exhaustless from the everlasting throne,
Shaded on either side by trees of life
Which yield in still unvarying interchange
Their ripe vicissitude of monthly fruits
Amid their clustering leaves medicinal."*

We are about to speak only of the leaves of this true arbor vita, "the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." Of what can this tree be a type but of our Lord Jesus Christ and his salvation? What can it signify but that the presence of Christ preserves the inhabitants of heaven for ever free from sickness, while beyond heaven the precincts, among the nations, the saving influence is scattered? As the leaves fall from the trees, so does sacred influence descend from our Lord Jesus in heaven down to the sons of men; and as the leaves are the least precious products of a fruit-bearing tree, so the least things that have to do with him and come from him have a

healing virtue in them. I shall handle the text very briefly in reference to heaven, and then at full length endeavour to bring out its relation to earth, as the Holy Spirit may enable me.

I. IN REFERENCE TO HEAVEN. If you read the passage you will see that the heavenly city is described as having an abundance of all manner of delights. Do men rejoice in wealth? "The very streets are paved with gold exceeding clear and fine." The gates are pearls and the walls are built of precious stones. No palace of the Caesars or of the Indian Moguls could rival the gorgeous riches of the city of the Great King.

*"That city with the jewelled crest
Like some new-lighted sun;
A blaze of burning amethyst,
Ten thousand orbs in one."*

In our cities we feel greatly the need of light. It must have been a dreary age when our ancestors groped their way at night through unlighted streets, or gathered poor comfort from the feeble, struggling rays of a poor candle placed over each householder's door. The heavenly city knows no night at all, and consequently needs no candle; indeed, its endless day is independent of the sun itself, "for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Conveniences for worship are terribly needed in many of our great cities, and it is a good work to erect temples in which worshippers may assemble; but, speaking paradoxically, heaven is well supplied in this respect, because of an utter absence both of the need of such places and of the places themselves. "I saw no temple therein," for indeed the whole place is a temple, and every street is in the highest sense hallowed ground. O blessed place, where we shall not need to enter into our closet to worship our Father who is in

heaven, but shall in the open street behold the unveiled vision of God. O blessed time, when there shall be no Sabbaths, but one endless Sabbath! O joy of joys when there shall be no breaking up of happy congregations, but where the general assembly and church of the firstborn shall be met for an everlasting sederunt, and spend it all in glorifying God.

Cities on earth should more and more strive after purity. I am glad that more attention is being paid to cleanliness. Too long has the age of filth made the crowded populations the prey of disease and death. Up yonder in heaven the sanitary measures are perfection, for "there shall by no means enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie." There every inhabitant is without fault before the throne of God, having neither spot nor wrinkle. There everything healthy, everything holy, and the thrice Holy One himself is there in their midst. As for the necessities under which glorified beings may be placed we know but very little about them, but certainly if they need to drink there is the river of the water of life, clear as crystal, and if they require to eat there are abundant fruits ripening each month upon that wondrous tree. All that saints can possibly need or desire will be abundantly supplied. No pining want or grim anxiety shall tempt them to ask the question, "What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed?" "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters."

Nor is there merely provision made for bare necessities, their love of beauty is considered. The city itself shines "like a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal"; and her glorious foundations are garnished with all manner of precious stones, insomuch that her light, as seen afar by the

nations, gladdens them and attracts them to her. A city whose streets are lined with trees laden with luscious fruits must be lovely beyond all expression. They said of the earthly Jerusalem, "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion;" but what shall we say of thee, O Jerusalem above? Zion! Zion! Our happy home where our Father dwells, where Jesus manifests his love, whither so many of our brethren have wended their happy way, to which our steps are evermore directed: blessed are the men that stand in thy streets and worship within thy gates! When shall we also behold thy brightness and drink of the river of thy pleasures? Thus in all respects the new Jerusalem is furnished, even with medicine it is supplied, and though we might suppose it to be no more needed, yet it is a joy to perceive that it is there to prevent all maladies in those whom aforetime it has healed. Leaves for health are plentiful above, and hence the inhabitant shall no more say, "I am sick."

As everything good is present, our text hints that nothing ill is there. One of the worst ills that can ever happen to a man is sickness, for, if he be suffering from disease, his gold is cold and cheerless metal; if he be languishing, the light is dark in his tabernacle; if he pine away with pain, he cannot enjoy his food; neither is beauty any longer fair to him. But there can be no sickness in heaven, because the tree of life bestows immortal health on all beneath its shade; its leaves exhale a balmy influence, fostering the vigour of immortality. Sickness and suffering are banished by this tree of life. "There shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away." As want is banished, as darkness is unknown, as infirmity is shut out, as anxiety and doubt and fear and dread are far away, so will all bodily and spiritual disease be for ever removed.

It is in heaven, according to our text, again, that there grows

the tree which is not only health to heaven, but which brings healing to the nations here below. Heaven is the abode of Jesus, and Jesus is the tree of life. If any man would be healed of the guilt of sin he must look to the eternal merits of the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world, who is now upon the throne of God. If any man would be saved from daily temptation and trial he must look to our advocate in glory who intercedes for us, and pleads that, when sifted as wheat, our faith may not fail. If anyone of us would be saved from spiritual death we must look to Jesus, for he lives at the right hand of the Father, for because he lives we shall live also. "He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." I say that Jesus Christ, my Lord and Master, is in heaven, and is there comparable to a tree planted in the very centre of the city: under his broad shadow the redeemed delight to sit, and his leaves as they are wafted down to earth bring health with them. If we would be healed, we must gather those leaves and apply them to the wounds and bruises of our souls, and we shall surely recover. Look upward, then, by means of the Scripture before us, to heaven, and see it full of every good, see it purged of every ill, and see in it the great conduit head, from which abundant streams of healing flow down to men below.

II. Now let us come practically to the text IN REFERENCE TO OURSELVES BELOW. "The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." There is, then, an abundance of healing power in Jesus Christ and his salvation. Not only is his fruit sweet and nourishing, but the leaves, the little things as it were about Christ, are full of healing virtue.

We will begin our meditation upon the truth of the text by noticing that all the nations are sick. Leaves are provided for their healing, which would be superfluous if they did not require to be healed. We have in our time heard great talk about

discovering pure, unsophisticated tribes, beautiful in native innocence, untainted with the vices of civilization; but it has turned out to be all talk. Travellers have penetrated into the heart of Africa, and they have found these naked innocents, but they have turned out to be "hateful and hating one another." Voyagers have landed upon lovely islets of the sea, and found, unsophisticated innocents eating each other! They have gone into the backwoods and discovered

*"The poor Indian, whose untutored mind
Sees God in clouds, and hears him in the wind,"
but they have found him cunning as a fox and
cruel as a wolf. Though Pope tells us that
the true God is
"Father of all in every age,
In every clime adored,
By saint, by savage, and by sage,
Jehovah, Jove, or Lord,"*

yet we find neither sages nor savages so worshipping unless the gospel has instructed them. No, the savage nations have been found so morally sick that their customs have shocked humanity, and men have turned from them with horror. Alas, poor human nature, even apart from the many evil inventions of civilization, this disease is terrible!

Neither have nations been delivered from the dread malady of sin by refinement and culture. They tell us a great deal about the wonderful perfection of the ancient Greeks, and certainly they did understand how to draw the human form, and for delineating physical grace and beauty we cannot rival their sculptors; but when we come to look at the Greek moral form, how graceless and uncomely! The ordinary morals of a Greek were too horrible to be described, and when

Paul felt it absolutely needful to speak of them he was obliged to write that terrible first chapter of Romans, which no man can read without a blush, or close without a sigh that such an indictment was too sadly just. God forbid that the filthiness which the ancients tolerated should ever be revived among us; their very sages were not clear from unmentionable crimes. The Hindoos and Chinese, those polished nations of modern times, do they excel? Is it not a fact that India reeks with lasciviousness which will not endure to be thought upon? Ah, Lord God, thou knowest! All the nations need healing, our own among them; if you doubt it, open your eyes and ears. Do not iniquities abound? Are not profanities to be heard in our very streets? Go to the west end and see its fashionable sin, or to the east end and see its more open wickedness; or stay on this side the Thames and mark the degradation of thousands. Evidence overwhelming will come before you to show that our nation needs healing if you traverse the streets beneath the pale light of the moon, or even pass the doors of those haunts of gaiety which have of late been so enormously multiplied.

And all individuals in every nation want healing. It is not that some of us are sick and some whole by nature, but we are altogether fallen, and all of us born in sin. The evil is in our nature from the very beginning, and nothing within the reach of mere man can purge away the evil, let him dream as he may.

There is but one cure for the nations— the leaves of the tree. There grows no healing herb but the one plant of renown. There is one sacred fountain, to wash therein is health,— there is but one, it was opened upon Calvary. There is one great Physician who lays his hands on men and they are restored: there is but one. Those who pretend that their hands can minister salvation, and that drops of water from their fingers can bring regeneration, are accursed. No, there is no balm in

Gilead, there is no physician there, the balm is at the cross, the Physician is at the right hand of God.

Jesus is pictured here as a blessed tree whose leaves heal the nations. Now, the point of the text is this, that the very leaves are healing, from which I gather that the least thing about Christ is healing. It is said of the blessed man in the first Psalm, "His leaf also shall not wither:" God takes care of the little things, the trifles, of believers; and here of our Lord it is said, "The leaves are for the healing of the nations:" that is to say, even his common things, his lower boons of grace, are full of virtue. Many know but very little about Jesus Christ, but if they believe on him, that little heals them. How very few of us know much of our Lord. Some only know that he came into the world to save sinners; I wish that they knew more, so that they could feed upon the fruits of the tree of life, but even to know that is salvation to them, for the leaves heal the nations. Dost thou know thyself a sinner? Wilt thou have Christ to be a Saviour? Soul, wilt thou rely upon his precious blood to make expiation for thy sin? Then, though thou hast not yet reached up to the golden apples, yet since a leaf has fallen upon thee it will save thee. The touch of his hand opened deaf ears, the spittle of his lips enlightened blind eyes, the look of his eye softened hard hearts. The least fragment of this sovereign remedy has omnipotence in it.

We may also learn that the humblest and most timid faith in Jesus Christ will save. It is a grand thing to believe in Jesus Christ with all your heart, and soul, and strength; it is delightful never to doubt, but to go from strength to strength until you come to full assurance of understanding; but if you cannot thus mount up with wings as eagles you will be saved if you come limping to Jesus. If you have but a mustard-seed of faith you are saved. She who in the press touched but the hem of the Saviour's garment found that virtue flowed out of him and

came to her. Pluck a leaf of this tree by thy poor trembling faith, and if thou darest not take more than that yet shall it make thee whole.

Beloved, after we have been saved from our sin by faith in Jesus Christ it is very wonderful how everything about Christ will help to purge the blood, which as yet is not cleansed. Study his example, and as you look at the lovely traits of his character, his gentleness and yet his boldness, his consecration to our cause and his zeal for the glory of God, you will find as you value his excellences they will exercise a curative power over you. You will be ashamed to be selfish, you will be ashamed to be idle, you will be ashamed to be proud when you see what Jesus was. Study him, and you will grow like him. If we take his precepts, and I hope we prize them as highly as we do his doctrines, there is not a command of our Lord but what possesses a sacred power, by the application of the Holy Spirit, to cure some fault or other of our character. Do thou as he bids thee, and thou shalt be made whole. Why, there is not a word that ever fell from those dear lips but what bears healing in it for some one or other of the thousand ills that have befallen our humanity. It is a sweet thing to get even a broken text from his mouth. His least words are better than the best of others. Lay a word from him, like a grain of medicine, upon your tongue and keep it there all day. With what a flavour it fills the mouth! How sweetly it perfumes the breath! It is a grand thing to bind a promise round your arm; how strong it makes each sinew! How forceful for the battle of life. It is a blessed thing to take his cheering words, which are fragrant as “a cluster of camphire,” and carry them in the bosom, for they chase away sadness and inspire dauntless courage. A word of his, being his, and recognised as his and coming home to the heart as his, brings healing to head and heart, conscience and imagination, desire and affection. A leaf of the tree of life is a medicine fitted

to raise the dead. Do you not know its power by a joyful experience? Blessed be God, some of us know it right well, and can bear glad witness to its matchless power.

Then, too, this medicine heals all sorts of diseases. The text puts it, "The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." It does not say of this or that malady, but by its silence it teaches us that the medicine is universal in its curative power. Take this medicine, then, dear friends, to any man, whoever he may be, and let it be applied by the Spirit of God, and it will heal him of whatsoever disease he has, because the gospel strikes at the root of all diseases. Truly it exercises power over all the different branches of the upas tree of evil, but it does so by laying the axe at the root, for it deals with sin, the sin of unbelief, the sin of not loving God; and dealing with this it removes thereby the various forms in which spiritual disease develops itself in human life. No medicine can ever heal all maladies unless it eradicates the root of the evil, and creates a fountain of health; now, the gospel applied by the Spirit of God is radical, it goes to the root of the matter, operates upon the heart, and purifies the issues of life. Human precepts and methods of morality lop the boughs but leave the trunk of the deadly tree untouched, but this cuts the tap-root, and tears away the evil growth from beneath the soil. For this cause it is able to remove all diseases.

This medicine heals disease because it searches into the innermost nature. Some medicines are only for the skin; others will only touch a few organs, and those not vital; but the leaves of the gospel tree, when taken as medicine, penetrate the reins and search the heart. Their searching operations divide between the joints and the marrow, and discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. A wondrous medicine this! It searches the soul through and through, and never ceases its operations till it has purged the entire manhood of every relic of sin, and

made it completely clean. Lord give us these leaves! Lord give us these leaves continually! Create in us a clean heart and renew a right spirit within us. "Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom but this can never be unless thou give us to drink of this most potent medicine.

These leaves prevent the recurrence of disease by enabling the man henceforth to find good in all that comes to him. A person diseased, if healed, may, by the food which he shall afterwards receive, bring on the disease again. Place a man under certain conditions which cause him an illness; you may heal him, but if you lead him back to those conditions he may soon be ailing again. And here in such a world as this, even if Christ healed us to-day we should be sick to death to-morrow, if the medicine had not some wondrous continuance of power. And so it is; for all things that come to us after conversion are changed, because we are changed; all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose. Have we earthly joy? We no longer idolise it, but it now points us to God, the giver. Have we earthly sorrow? We dare not despair because of it, for we know who has ordained it. Why should a child of God complain who knows that there is love in every chastening stroke of his Father's rod? What we once called good is now really good to us; what we called ill is no longer ill to us, for the leaves of the tree of life are an infallible antidote. What would have been our poison is now our food, and what might have destroyed us now builds us up.

This wondrous medicine abides in the system as a source of health. "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life." Other medicine taken into the system acts in its own manner, and there is an end of it, but this abides. These healing leaves change the life blood,

affect the spirits, and make the nature other than it was before. Yonder in heaven those faces which look so bright and comely, fresher than new born babes, owe their freshness to these healing leaves; and so until the glory life begins the abiding power of the healing leaves keeps the soul of the believer in perpetual health, and will keep him so world without end.

I have shown that the leaves will heal all diseases. I will occupy a minute with the glad truth that these leaves heal whole nations. They are suited to the peculiarities of differing nations. The gospel has never been carried to a people who did not want it, or whom it did not suit. It has been found equally applicable to the ignorant Hottentot and the subtle Hindoo. No man has been found too degraded for its operation, nor too civilised for its benefits. The gospel has such abundant power that it heals nations, and “nations” is a large word, comprehending millions; but the leaves of this tree can heal countless armies of men, and it will

*“...Never lose its power
Till all the ransomed church of God
Be saved to sin no more.”*

It is a happy circumstance that an agent of such potency is diffusable by the simplest means. A medicine consisting of leaves may be carried by the apothecary where he wills: it is no cumbrous matter. So may we carry the gospel to the utmost ends of the earth, and we will carry it, and send it to every habitation. The winds shall waft it, the waves shall bear it wherever man is found. These leaves are not cumbrous like the stage properties of Popery, but are readily scattered, and wherever they go no climate injures them. The cold of Greenland has not been too severe to prevent the Greenlander rejoicing in the Saviour’s blood; and the heat of the torrid zone has not been too

intense to prevent believers from rejoicing in the Sun of Righteousness. No, beloved, the gospel heals nations wherever the nations may be, and readily heals them of the direst miseries and the blackest crimes. It is the cure for poverty, by making men wise and economical; it is the cure for slavery, teaching men to love their fellows and respect the rights of all; it is the cure for drunkenness, weaning the drunkard from his filthy appetite, saving him from the spell which binds him. The gospel is the only preventive for war. We shall need no blood-red soldiery when once the warriors of the Cross have won the clay. This is the cure for those foul evils which are the curse of our social economies, which human laws too often increase instead of removing. This shall purge us from every form of knavery, rebellion, and discontent, and this only. God grant that its healing influences may drop upon the nations thick as leaves in Vallambrosa, till that golden age shall dawn in which the world shall be the abode of moral health.

I must remind you before I pass away from this, and it is a very sweet thing to remind you of, that this medicine is given and appointed for the very purpose of healing. I draw your attention to this for the comfort of any who feel their sickness this morning—“The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.” You look up to this tree and say, “I am sick at heart; I know that here is my cure, but may I dare to partake of it?” Partake freely, for the tree was planted on purpose for you. In the eternal purpose and decree of God Christ was given to heal the nations. In actual fulfilment he has healed nations—many nations already enjoy a partial health because multitudes of individuals in those nations have been healed. Great works have been done in the Isles of the Sea. When I think of England, and of the gems of the Southern Sea, and of Madagascar, the Lord seems to have a peculiar favour towards the isles, for in the islands the gospel has spread more abundantly than

elsewhere: "Let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof." The tree is planted with intent that its leaves should heal, you need not then hesitate and enquire, "May I be healed?" It grows for the sick. Are you sick? It grows for you. The other day I was thirsty, and passed a drinking fountain; I never paused to ask whether I might drink, for I knew it was placed there for the thirsty, and being thirsty I drank. Who hesitates for a moment when he is in a lonely spot upon the sea-beach, and finds that there is health in every billow, to strip himself and plunge into the wave? Does he ask if he may? Surely God has spread the ocean that man may bathe. If I want to breathe, being in the air, I ask no man's liberty to breathe, nor do I sigh for God's leave either, for did not he give me liberty when he gave me lungs and bade the breezes blow? Since you see Christ before you, brother, take Christ! You need not ask any man's liberty, nor pine for divine permission; has he not said, "whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely"? He bids you receive, he commands you to believe, and he threatens you if you do not. He says to his servants: "Compel them to come in;" and as to those who refuse to come he says, "He that believeth not shall be damned." What fuller leave or licence can be imagined?

These words to close with. Are you sick this morning? Take these leaves freely. Are you very sick? The stronger is the reason why you should take them. You are sinful; past guilt troubles you, take the leaves again and again. Worse than that, tendencies to evil afflict you; you would fain be rid of them, feed on the purging leaves as long as you live and they will prove an antidote. You need not think that you will exhaust the merit or power of Christ, for if the fruit is described as coming twelve times in the year, how abundant must the leaves be? There is enough in Christ for every sin-sick sinner. If the sinner do but come to Jesus he shall find no stint in Jesus' healing power; though the sick soul be full of leprosy the Saviour is full

of grace. Put forth thy finger sister, and touch the hem of Jesus' garment now. Lift thine eye, sinner, look to Christ on the cross; though he seem far away from thee there is life in a glance, however dim the eye or distant the view. Come to this tree, its very leaves will heal thee.

Last of all, are you healed? Well, then, scatter these leaves. Are you saved? Speak of Jesus Christ to everybody. I wish you to teach others a whole Christ, if you can; I want always to make my ministry like Simeon's action when he took the Redeemer altogether into his arms, and said "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace." There was a long distance between Simeon with the Son of the Highest in his arms and the woman who touched the hem of the Master's garment, yet both have gone to heaven; and there is a good way between the Christian who can embrace a whole Christ, and a poor timid one who can only tremblingly hope in him. If you cannot tell others all about Christ, and give them the fruit of the tree, go and give them the leaves; and one very convenient way of doing so is that which you will help to-day, by aiding the Religious Tract Society, the friend of us all, on whose behalf I will add a word or two. "The leaves of the tree" — that is to say, even little portions and single pages about Christ will do good. It is a rule of the Tract Society that every tract shall have enough of Christ in it to save a soul if God shall bless it. Do not despise a mere leaf, or as you say, "a leaflet," for if Christ is in it it is a leaf of the tree, and he will bless it. Scatter, then, the gospel leaflets. Perhaps you have not the means to distribute Bibles and larger books, cover, then, your pathway with tracts. Large portions of our country still need wide distributions of tracts, and all the world outside our country needs the gospel, and needs the gospel in the printed form. Scatter the leaves. Let them fall as thickly as leaves descend in the last days of autumn. Scatter them everywhere, since they are for the healing of the nations.

The Tract Society, however, not only provides us with very excellent tracts, but it brings out books upon common subjects written in a religious tone; and this class of literature I hope will be multiplied, because people will not always read books on religious topics, but will read works on other subjects, and when these are written in a religious spirit they will exercise the most healthful influence. These books are not exactly the fruits of the life-giving tree, but they are leaves, and life is in them. I am glad to see the Society bringing out pictures to hang on cottage walls, and little illustrative texts done in colours, and the like, for anything about Christ will do good. It is wonderful how little a thing may save a soul, if Christ be in it. "A verse may strike him whom a sermon flies," and a picture on a wall may awaken a train of thought in a man who would not listen to that same thought if spoken in words. Remember Colonel Gardiner and his remarkable conversion by looking at a picture of Christ upon the cross. While waiting to fulfil an assignation of the most infamous kind he saw a picture of our dying Lord, and under it written: "I did all this for thee, what hast thou ever done for me?" The assignation was never kept, and the colonel became a brave soldier for Jesus Christ. Possibly we may not think well of representations of the crucifixion, which is a theme beyond the painter's art, but there can be no question that it is our duty to set forth Christ among the people by our speech, so that he may be seen by their mind's eye, evidently crucified among them. Make the passing throng see the gospel in every corner of the streets if you can. Paste up texts of Scripture among business announcements; hang them up in your kitchens, in your parlours, and in your drawing rooms. I hate to see Christian men hang up abominable Popish things, as they sometimes do, because they happen to be works of art. Burn every one of such artful works, whether prints or paintings. I would take the hammer and administer it with an iconoclastic

zeal on all images and pictures of saints and virgins and the like, which do but tempt men to idolatry. Degrade not your houses by anything which insults your God, but let your adornments be such as may lead men's thoughts aright; and never let a man say in hell "I was misled by a work of art on your wall which was also a work of the devil, and suggested evil thoughts."

Everywhere bring Christ to the front and scatter his words, like leaves from the tree. If you cannot do more, do this and show your gratitude to your Lord.

SIXTY-SIX
THE THRONE OF GOD AND OF
THE LAMB

SERMON GIVEN ON JANUARY 1, 1970

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 22:3

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 27

*"The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be
in it."*

REVELATION 22:3

WE shall take these words as referring to heaven. Certainly it is most true of the celestial city, as well as of the millennial city, that the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it. This theme of surpassing interest intimately concerns all of us who are believers: for to the rest eternal at the foot of the throne we are constantly looking. Were it otherwise, I fear there would be little prospect of our ever passing the heavenly portals. We do not suppose that a man is shooting at a target if he does not look that way; nor can we imagine that a man's ambition is fixed on

heaven if he has no heavenward thoughts or aspirations. The pilgrim turns his steps towards the place he is desirous to reach. What though he cannot catch a glimpse of the distant spot which is the goal of his hope, yet his eyes are in that direction. Let him climb a hill on a clear day, and you will see how he strains his eyeballs to catch a glimpse of tower or spire, minaret or battlement, of the city he is seeking. When he descends the valley, and the outlook is dreary, he solaces his soul with songs in the night that tell of "a day's march nearer home." The anticipated greetings of friends gladden his heart. After a noble fashion the prospect of heaven lights up our sad days with gleams of glory; while our happy Sabbaths here below have often made us long for the sanctuary on high. In the crowded courts of this Tabernacle our fancy has pictured the Temple above of living stones and countless worshippers. Bunyan speaks of Mount Clear from which with aid of telescope the celestial city might be descried in the distance. We have enjoyed intervals when no clouds or mists have obstructed our outlook, and these have usually come to us on the Lord's days. A friend of mine when he went to reside in Newcastle-on-Tyne was looking over a newly-built house that was to let; and as he looked out of the window in the top room, the landlord said to him, "You can see Durham cathedral from here on a Sunday." My friend, failing at first to catch his meaning, said, "Why on Sunday more than any other day?" "Well," said he, "the furnaces are not going, and the smoke is not rising to darken the atmosphere." I was not surprised to hear that the passing incident supplied my friend with a parable the next time that he preached. On special Sabbaths we peer into the city of which our text says, "The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it." God grant that our meditations may stir your upward longings, and that our discourse may excite your desires towards heaven.

Come, then, let us think upon the throne of God, and of the Lamb, and of the place where it is. But stop a moment; I want you to look round and take a preliminary survey of the scene. Do you notice that this throne is the "throne of God and of the Lamb"? Doubtless you know where John got that phrase, that title for Christ— "the Lamb." It is almost peculiar to himself. You catch the note in Isaiah; Jesus is celebrated as a lamb in his prophecies. You hear the name in an epistle of Peter, and in the Acts of the Apostles as a quotation from the evangelical prophet. But with John it is a most familiar term. John, the best beloved of all the disciples of Jesus, loves this sweet symbol, and delights to speak of his Lord as "the Lamb." This John had been a disciple of that other John, the Baptist, whose chief and choicest sermon, which lingered most in his mind and memory, was couched in words like these — "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." John the Baptist struck a note which vibrated throughout the whole life of John the Divine. In Patmos John recalls his early impressions, for old men delight in the scenes and sayings of their youth.

When John began his gospel, he was absorbed in "the Word;" now that he unfolds the wondrous scroll of vision he portrays "the Lamb." As the key-note of Redemption the name recurs frequently in his writings, and in his closing book the name comes back to him with all its music, and he dwells upon it with evident delight. The word "arnion," as used in the book of Revelation, might be translated "a little lamb." It is a diminutive in the Greek text, expressive, as Dean Woodhouse observes, of tenderness and love; and in such sense our Saviour himself used it in addressing Peter, after his resurrection — "Lovest thou me? feed my lambskins." I refer to the idiom without any wish to see the common rendering altered; but it seems to show a marvellous degree of familiarity in John's mind with his blessed Master, when he looks upon him as the little

lamb to be loved, for you know how wont we are to express affection in diminutive terms. "My little dear," or "my little darling," are expressions that trip sweetly from our tongues. On the other hand, were we to say, "my dear big daughter," or "my dear tall son," the words would sound awkwardly. We naturally give diminutive names to our favourites. Thus you will observe, dear friends, that while our divine Lord has names of infinite majesty which appeal to our loftiest homage, he has also names of pure simplicity, like "the holy child Jesus" and "the little lamb," when he appears to us innocent as a babe, or suffering as a sacrifice.

I. The sublime adoration of the heavenly host is offered to the Lamb that was slain and hath redeemed us to God by his blood out of every kindred and tongue, and people, and nation. In order to behold the throne of God, and of the Lamb, you must first of all get a sight of the Lamb. I invite you, therefore, in the words of John the Baptist, to "BEHOLD THE LAMB of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Look at him in the dawn of his ministry, when first he comes within the range of mortal vision — a man, a lowly man, one chosen out of the people. About him there is neither form nor comeliness to make him at all remarkable; he is one who did not strive, or cry, or cause his voice to be heard in the streets; not a pretentious, nor an ambitious man, but one who could say of himself, and nobody could gainsay it, "I am meek and lowly in heart." He was born in Bethlehem; he grew and waxed strong in spirit; he increased in wisdom and stature. I suppose that when he was a child he spake as a child, understood as a child, and thought as a child: I know that he abode with his parents, and was subject to them. In his mature years, when he was manifested to Israel, we behold him, the sinless One, endowed with the common faculties and afflicted with the common infirmities of our mortal race. He suffered the breath of slander, he wept with

mourners; he groaned beneath the burden of care, and smarted under the pangs of pain. He lived and he died in the presence of many witnesses: what further evidence could be desired that Jesus was a man and not a myth, a lamb-like man, and none of your pretenders to greatness?

His character, too, is so purely natural that the example of excellence he sets needs no explanation. The gentle disposition that drew little children around him, the kindly temper that bore reviling without anger, the love he showed to the poor and destitute, the respect he paid to the outcasts of society, and above all his kindly notice of publicans and harlots, as sheep gone astray who were capable of being restored, claim our gratitude, and cause us to regard him as the model of goodness for all generations. Such is the man whom all the kindreds of this earth must ultimately acknowledge as "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." How lamb-like he is!

Thus you see the Lamb of God among men: will you track his footsteps still farther on till he becomes the Lamb of sacrifice, and actually takes the sin of man upon himself, that he may bear its penalty? What an extraordinary night that was when he rose up from the supper table and said to his disciples, "Let us go hence." He went to a certain garden where he had been accustomed to spend nights in meditation; he went there to pray. And oh, what a prayer it was; such surely as heaven never heard before nor since. In an agony he prayed more earnestly, and yet more earnestly, till "he sweat, as it were, great drops of blood, falling to the ground." He cried to the Father, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Then did the heavy cloud of human sins overshadow his soul, and the ghastly terrors of all his people's guilt brood over his spirit. He proved the hour of dread and the power of darkness. Arrested by one who had eaten bread with him, he was betrayed into the hands of conspirators. By an apostle who turned apostate he was sold

for a few paltry pieces of silver. From the place of private retreat, and of secret prayer, he was hurried off to prison and to judgment. Before Herod and Caiaphas, and then before Pontius Pilate, was he arraigned. All through the night he was falsely accused and foully mocked, scourged, spit upon, and treated with the utmost contempt. So was his heart broken within him because of the reproaches of them that reproached God which fell upon him. Deserted by his disciples, denounced by the priests, despised by the populace, he was at length delivered up to the malice of his foes, and, sentenced by Pilate, he was led away to be crucified: still his patience was conspicuous, and when he was led as a lamb to the slaughter he opened not his mouth.

Now you shall see the full weight of sin pressing upon “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” Every morning and every evening there had been a lamb sacrificed in the tabernacle as the type and emblem of this Lamb of God who was yet to come. A pretty little innocent lamb that a child might fondle was brought up to the priest, and its warm blood was made to flow in pain, and it was offered as a sacrifice upon the altar. But now he comes— the last of all lambs, the first too — the real lamb, the Lamb of God, of which the others were but types. Him they took, silent, passive, submissive, and nailed him to a cross. There he hung in the glare of the sun till the torture of tender nerves in his hands and feet produced such fever in his flesh that he said, “My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws, and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.” Such was the dissolution of his entire frame it seemed as if he had no longer a solid body: it was melted with bitter pain. There he hung, men jeering him, till at last the sun could bear the sight no longer, and veiled his face; the earth could no more endure to be the stage for such a tragedy, and began to rock and reel; the very dead were stirred

as though they could not slumber in their graves while such a deed was done, so tombs were opened and many arose. Oh, it was a wondrous spectacle. Those that saw it smote upon their breasts, and went upon their way. It was the Son of God "bearing, that we might never bear, his Father's righteous ire."

Behold him, bruised between the upper and nether millstones of divine justice in thy stead and mine, that God, without the violation of his holy law, might turn to us in infinite mercy and blot out our transgressions and quench the devouring fire of his wrath. Say, then, beloved, have you ever seen this sight? Have you so seen it as to sing with our poet—

*"My soul looks back to see
The burdens thou didst bear,
When hanging on the cursed tree,
And hopes her guilt was there"?*

Do you trust him? Are you believing him? His cry from the cross is "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." Have you so looked? If so, then you have had the preliminary sight: and I pray God so to strengthen the eyes of your understanding that you may gaze more intently on this vision of the Apocalypse—"The throne of God and of the Lamb."

II. BEHOLD THE THRONE. Let us see it first from the Lamb's side of it. Of course there is only one throne: God and the Lamb are not divided. The Lamb is God, and the interests of God and the Lamb are one. The one kingdom of God, even the Father, is identical with the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Acknowledging the oneness of the throne, we proceed to inspect it from the point of view in which the Lamb chiefly challenges our notice. You will remember that he is portrayed to us as "the Lamb in the midst of the throne." So John beheld him, as you read in the fifth chapter of the Revela-

tion and sixth verse. But I would not have you make any mistake about the meaning of that phrase. Dr. Watts constructed a poor paraphrase of the passage when he said—

*“Our Jesus fills the middle seat
Of the celestial throne.”*

There is no such idea in Holy Scripture. The midst of the throne means the front of the throne, according to the Greek. The Lamb was not on the throne in that vision, but standing immediately before it. That is a position in which our Lord Jesus Christ would have us see him. I will show you presently that he is on the throne according to our text, but not according to the passage which I have just now quoted. In the previous narrative of the fifth chapter, where the Lamb is said to be in the midst of the throne, means in the front of it, in the centre, standing there that we might draw near and approach the throne through him. To the awful throne of God there could be no access except through a Mediator; he stands therefore in the front of the throne between us and the invisible, sovereign God, an interposer and interpreter, one of a thousand, the daysman who can lay his hand upon both. This is a beautiful thought. Jesus, according to the former vision of this revelation, is in the front of the throne where God always sees him before he sees us. I cannot endure the sight of God until I see him in Christ; and God cannot bear the sight of me till he sees me in Christ. Wonderful is that text in the book of Exodus, “When I see the blood I will pass over you.” He does not say, “When you Israelites see the blood I will pass over you.” Why, they were not in a position to see it; for they were inside the house, and the blood was outside, on the lintel and on the two side-posts. It is true, they had seen the Lamb as it was slain, for you remember that the whole assembly of the congregation was to

kill it between the two evenings; and they also saw the sprinkling of the blood: but their safety did not depend so much upon their having seen it as upon God's continually seeing it,—
 "When I see the blood I will pass over you." In like manner the covenant security of the saints arises rather from God the Father looking to his Son Jesus Christ as their surety and sacrifice, than from the constant exercise of their faith. Hence we rightly plead in our hymn: —

*"Him and then the sinner see:
 Look through Jesus wounds on me."*

There, then, our Lord Jesus stands in front of the throne interceding for us, interposing for us, opening the way for us to approach to God, even the Father.

I have drawn your attention to this previous vision as a preliminary to that of our text, in which the position of Jesus Christ is upon the throne reigning there, clothed bodily with all the power of the Godhead. Do not forget that it is even so. The Lamb is on the throne. Co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, very God he is, very God he always was. We do not forget the glory which he had with the Father or ever the earth was, but it is as God-man Mediator that he is now, in his complex person, invested with heavenly honours.

*"This is the Man, th' exalted Man,
 Whom we unseen adore.
 But when our eyes behold his face,
 Our hearts shall love him more."*

The full glory of his Person as Son of God and Son of man shall be manifested when he shall be beheld upon the throne of God. He who once appeared as the sacrificed and slaughtered

Lamb shall reign with supreme authority; the blessed and only Potentate, King of kings and Lord of lords. It is the throne of God and of the Lamb.

The power thus conferred upon him the Lamb not only possesses by right, and title, but he exercises it in deed and in truth. "All power," said our risen Redeemer, "is given unto me in heaven and in earth." He ruleth now with unlimited sway: and the sceptre of his kingdom is a right sceptre. As Joseph was exalted in Egypt, and Pharaoh said, "See, I have set thee over all the land ; and the people cried before him, Bow the knee; and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt": even so we read of Jesus, "God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord in the glory of God the Father." The rebellious are not exempted from his rule. What though they conspire against him, they shall be utterly confounded. One might fancy that there was a slight strain of language in Pharaoh's fiat, that "without Joseph no man shall lift his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt"; but there is no exaggeration if we apply the words to Christ, for it is a fact that every man living is responsible to Jesus for the thoughts and imaginations of his heart. He is King for ever. The throne of heaven is the throne of God and of the Lamb. His dominion over nature always appears to me a delightful contemplation. I like to think of the sea roaring and the floods clapping their hands in his praise. He it is who makes the fields joyful and the trees of the forest glad. His pencil paints the varied hues of the flowers, and his breath perfumes them. Every cloud floats o'er the sky wafted by the breath of his mouth. Lord of all the realms of life and death, his providence runs without knot or break through all the tangled skeins of time. All events, obvious or obscure, great or small, are subject to his influence, and fostered or frus-

trated by his supremacy. The Lord reigneth, and of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.

Thy royal prerogative, O Lamb of God, extends over all the realms of grace. Thou, O Lord Jesus, dost dispense mercy as seemeth good in thy sight. As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickens whom he will, even so he has given to the Son to have life in himself, and to quicken whomsoever he pleases. As head of the church, his benign control is absolute amongst the members of his body. In the bestowment of spiritual gifts, and in the appointment to sacred offices, he rules and regulates, and nothing is too minute to escape his notice. How pleasant to my poor heart to think that he who bowed his head to shame is now exalted, as God over all, to such a seat of honour. I feel that no odium I could incur, no injury I could sustain in preaching his name and publishing his fame, could be of any account in comparison with my joy in seeing him exalted. Let me starve in a garret or die in a ditch if only Christ be glorified. The old soldiers of Napoleon, rank and file, revelled in the triumphs of their general. When they fell on the battlefield, with shouts of victory ringing in the air, they seemed to think light of death so long as the emperor had won renown, and the eagles of France were in the ascendant. Live for ever, royal Lamb! Reign for ever, victorious Lord! As for us, who or what are we? Brethren, let us follow him in the tribulation of the hour while the fight is fierce, so shall we find ourselves in his train when his triumph is trumpeted forth before the assembled universe. "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

What lowly reverence we owe to him who occupies such a throne of boundless empire! Approach him then with profound humility; but mingle therewith the most childlike confidence. Beloved, we see before us the grandeur of God and the gentleness of a Lamb. The infinite Creator and the innocent creature

are linked together in lovely union. He who is God over all, blessed for ever, has resources amply sufficient to meet your utmost wants. You do not come to a finite helper when you draw near to Christ. In trusting to the merit of his blood, you have an all-prevalent plea and full security for pardon, peace, and acceptance. You come to the throne of the Lamb, and that throne of the Lamb is the throne of God. "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." There is no stinted provision in such a treasury. All the riches of the glory of God are treasured up in Christ Jesus, and Christ has all this wealth to bestow it all upon his redeemed family. I do not know what hope and expectations the Socinian can cherish with a Man-Christ, or an Angel-Christ, or a semi-divine Christ, as a guide to immortality. They may honour Jesus of Nazareth for the purity of the life he lived on earth, but I want God in human flesh to save my soul, the death of the Son of God to wash away my sin. I find the fight of life so fierce that no right hand but that which made the heavens can ever give me the victory. I stay myself on the incarnate God who bled and died, and is gone into the excellent glory, and sits down there upon the throne, Lord over all: I trust his saving strength to bear me through. Let me challenge you, my hearers. Are you trusting him and staying yourselves only and wholly upon him? Could you be content with any one less than a divine Saviour? If you are born from above you could not. Magnify his name then, and worship him in the quiet of your hearts at this good hour.

Well, that is the aspect of the throne from the side of the Lamb. Let us now take another look and behold the throne of God. The throne of God is the throne of the Lamb. The throne of God, if we view it as sinners, with a sense of guilt upon our conscience, is an object of terror, a place to fly from. Our poet was right when he said—

*“Once ’twas a seat of burning wrath,
And shot devouring flame:
Our God appeared, consuming fire
And vengeance was his name.”*

I recollect when I had such terrible apprehensions of God, and I know that they were founded upon truth, for the Lord is terrible to unforgiven men. Now I do not disdain, as some do, to sing “Though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me.” Not that there has been a change in God. It is the view of God which the sinner is able to take which has been changed, and that change has been effected by Christ. From everlasting to everlasting Jehovah is the same: in him there is no variableness. Jesus did not die to make the Father love us, or to melt his aversion into affection. Nay, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, he loved us with an eternal love and chose us in the person of Christ before the foundation of the world. Still his justice was outraged by the transgressions we committed: and as a holy and just Sovereign his anger was kindled against us as sinners; and that anger was no less justly appeased by the death of Christ, when he put away our sins by the sacrifice of himself. By his precious blood a full atonement was made. Henceforth, eternal praises to his name, the throne of God is the throne of the Lamb. It is a throne of righteousness, but no less a throne of grace. There, on the throne of the Almighty, mercy reigns. According to the merit of the sacrifice and the virtue of the atonement all the statutes and decrees of the kingdom of heaven are issued. The altar and the throne have become identical. From that throne no fiery bolt can ever again be hurled against the believer, for it is the throne of the Lamb as well as the throne of God. Oh, what comfort there is for suffering saints in this

conjunction of majesty and mercy on the throne of the Highest.

The sovereignty that is signified by this throne must certainly be unlimited. The throne of God is the throne of an absolute monarch who doeth as he wills among the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of this lower world. From that throne the proclamation comes like a peal of thunder, "The Lord reigneth; let the people tremble." God's throne of sovereignty is not a throne of arbitrary power, for the Lord is perfect and holy, and his will is just and right. In acting according to the purpose of his own will he abounds towards us in all wisdom and goodness. The sternness of law is linked with the sweetness of love; because while the throne of heaven is the throne of God, it is still the throne of the Lamb. I fear that I fail to find the words that will express my thoughts; but this empire of God and the Lamb endears itself to our hearts. There is about it a kingly kindness, and a majestic mercy most charming to the mind. Do any ask, What throne is that? To whom does it belong? We answer, — it is the throne of the great and glorious God, and it is the throne of the lowly lovely Lamb. The glorious Lord is gentle as a child; the lamb is lordly as a lion. Referring to the Book sealed with seven seals, described in the fifth chapter, St. Bernard said, "John heard of a lion and saw a lamb; the lamb opened the book and appeared a lion." But, behold, here it is, "the throne of God and of the Lamb." Put off thy shoes from thy feet, O seer; the place whereon thou standest is holy ground, for God is here. Come, little children, there is charm enough to entice you; for the Lamb is here. It is the throne of God, therefore fall down before it with awe and self-abasement; but it is the throne of the Lamb, and therefore you may stand up before it without fear. Does not a rich blend of splendour and tenderness dawn on your apprehension? Are you not sensible of some present effect on your souls? Do you

not feel the charming sweetness and the overpowering light? John tells us in the first chapter what his own sensations were, when the Son of man appeared to him in the midst of the seven candlesticks, vested with the insignia of Priest and King. First, he says, "When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead." Then he adds, "And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am"—Ah! when you recognize who he is, fear gives place to faith, and trust succeeds to trembling. Be of good courage, then, ye faint and timid disciples. Why do ye come creeping with bated breath to the throne of heavenly grace? Will ye always cry in the same strain, "Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners"? Such ye were, but ye are not so now. You are washed in the blood of the Lamb. You are his dear children. You have received the spirit of adoption. When ye pray, say, "Our Father which art in heaven." Let it be your pleasure, as it is your privilege, to hold nearer intercourse with God than Israel did, for no bounds are set about the mount. They had to stand at a distance; they dared not draw near lest they should die; they did even entreat that the terrible words might not be spoken to them any more; but you are a people near to him and dear to him, and the throne to which you owe allegiance is the throne of God and of the Lamb.

I am painfully conscious, as I proceed, that the subject is too much beyond my grasp to mould it into a sermon. This is not preaching. I have been merely holding up the text, and trying to suggest thought after thought, as the glory of my Lord's kingdom occurred to my mind. But what can any of us say in the presence of God and of the Lamb? Our proper position is to fall down upon our faces and worship. Isaiah saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim: pure and sinless as they were, their homage was lowly and obeisant. Each one had six wings: with twain he covered his face, with twain he

covered his feet, and with twain did he fly. In the presence of the Eternal, language fails us except the one adoring cry, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory." The only other exclamation appropriate to utter would be, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory and blessing."

One fact remains to be noticed— it is this: the throne of God and of the Lamb is in heaven. BEHOLD THEN THE THRONE IN HEAVEN. We must pass beyond this earthly region, and join the company of those who people the celestial realm before we can see the throne of God, so as to obtain a complete view of it. Is not this among the chief joys of heaven?

*"I'd part with all the joys of sense,
To gaze upon thy throne.
Pleasures spring fresh for ever thence,
Unspeakable, unknown."*

There are many ideas of heaven, and I suppose, according to each man's character, will be the prospects he cherishes, and the answer he gives when the question is asked— "What must it be to be there?" There is ample scope for imagination, so abundant are the joys which the Lord hath prepared for them that love him. There is the great wall, with its twelve glittering foundations, and there are the twelve gates, and the twelve several pearls; there, too, is the tree of life, with its twelve manners of fruits. Who shall ever tell forth all the meaning of the symbols used by holy men to set forth the Paradise of God?

Nor are the Scriptures our only source of information, for our sighs below are prophecies of the blessings laid up for us. The toil-worn labourer thinks of heaven as a land of rest, and he shall find it so. On the other hand, the relish that we have for

religious worship, and the delight we take in Christian work, leads us to think of heaven as a sanctuary where the servants of God can serve him day and night: we shall find it so. For my part, I sympathize with both expectations; for though they sound contrary, they need not clash. The rest of glorified spirits, so far from being a sort of suspended animation, will rather consist of a joyous refreshment in enthusiastic service; and the ministry of ransomed hosts, instead of wearying them, will arouse them to fly more swiftly, to sing more loudly, and to serve God more diligently as they see his face. Are there not tempted ones among you who smile as they think that there shall be no sin in heaven? To Paul, when in prison, knowing that the hour of his departure was at hand, after a life of preaching the word and enduring persecution, the crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous judge should give him was just then the most welcome anticipation. As the warriors look for a crown, so on the other hand friends look for communion. To loving hearts great is the bliss of heaven's unbroken fellowship of saints: it will indeed be a great joy in heaven to see all who loved the Lord below. How happy we shall be when these blessed reunions take place. Still, I think that all of you will agree with me that the heaven of heaven is that we shall be "with Christ, which is far better"—that we shall behold his face and partake of his glory. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be the centre of our delights. To have reached home in the heavenly Father's house, to have seen our Elder-brother, and to be sure that we shall abide with him and go no more out: oh, that is what we pant for! We long to hear his voice welcoming us to our new abode.

*"Come in, thou blessed, sit by me;
With my own life I ransomed thee;
Come, taste my perfect favour:*

*Come in, thou happy spirit, come;
 Thou now shalt dwell with me at home;
 Ye blissful mansions, make him room,
 For he must stay for ever."*

Beloved, our song will be to him who loved us; and yet we shall want to tell out to others our love to him. You cannot wash his feet with your tears, because he will wipe all your tears away; you cannot honour him with your substance there as you can here, for there will be no widows and orphans whom you can relieve, no poor and needy ones whom you can feed and clothe and visit, doing to his disciples as you would do unto him. But oh, to fall before him, and then to gaze upon him! He looks like a lamb that has been slain, and wears his priesthood still. Oh, for a sight of him! One said, "See Naples and die." But oh, if we could only see Christ, even on earth for a minute, we would be content to die and go home with him straightway; nor ask leave first to go and bid them farewell which are at our house.

What hallowed communion with him we shall there enjoy. In his church below he has given us some pleasant foretaste of his sweet converse; but there the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall always feed them, and shall lead them to living fountains of water. There is a text that I have been turning over in my mind for many years. I want to preach from it, but I cannot understand it clearly enough at present. I hope to preach from it one day before I go to heaven. If not, I will preach from it up there when I shall have realized its full significance. Ah! do not smile. Some opportunities we shall have in heaven to testify of Christ; for we shall make known unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places the manifold wisdom of God. It is difficult to imagine that we ever can be able to explore the whole of the unsearchable riches of Christ.

The passage I am referring to is that in which Jesus says, "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." Like Thomas, I am prone to ask questions. What is there to be prepared, and in what respect does heaven as a place need to be made ready? I do not like to think of heaven as a half-built habitation, or as fully built, yet only partly furnished. What means this preparing of a place for us? Perhaps our Lord's going there made heaven ready, and its mansions meet for the occupation of his disciples. Heaven would hardly be a home for saints in the absence of the Saviour. As I do not know the angels, and never was acquainted with any one of them, I doubt very much whether I should feel at home in their company if Jesus were not there too. There are a few saints up yonder whom I once knew and dearly loved. But one wants to be introduced to the whole of the residents, to the general assembly and church of the first-born in heaven. How can this happy familiarity be brought about? Now that Jesus is there we have a friend on high whom we have known, and who has known us, who can introduce us to all its inhabitants and acquaint us with all its joys. His presence is the light and the glory of the celestial city. My place will be prepared when I am safe in his arms, leaning on his gentle breast. There may be much work for the builder before all the plans and purposes of the eternal Architect are completed. Of that I do not know: of that, therefore, I cannot speak. Jesus has gone to prepare a place for his people; and we very distinctly perceive that he is preparing his people for the place.

Listen ye now; lend me your ears, and hearken to this concluding word that I have to say to you. Heavenward now we are hastening our steps. We long to reach the happy plains, because there is not only a rest to be enjoyed, but a festival to be celebrated. The marriage-supper of the Lamb draweth nigh.

His church shall be prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. We that are with him, following in his train, called, chosen, and faithful, are only espoused to him as yet, but we are going to that place where the voice shall be heard, "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his bride hath made herself ready." I halt. I dare not advance a step farther. I bring you to the margin of this blessed ocean of infinite delight. Oh, for a plunge into it— into the Godhead's deepest sea of love. Is there a more intimate relation into which our Lord Jesus Christ shall hereafter take his beloved people whereby we shall be for ever united to him? Shall we know the fulness of his love in a communion of which it were not lawful for a man to speak? Was this one of the unspeakable words which Paul heard when he was caught up into Paradise? Can it be that this marriage scene is the last act of the new creation, as it was of the old creation, when the Lord God found and formed a helpmeet for Adam? "This is a great mystery. I speak concerning Christ and the church."

Till the day break and the shadows flee away, let us wait for the Bridegroom's appearing, and the home-bringing of the bride. As virgins that look forward to the marriage day let us keep our lamps trimmed, and see to it that there is oil in our vessels, lest when the cry is heard, "The Bridegroom cometh" any of us should need to nurse the dimly-burning spark, or despairingly cry, "Our lamps are gone out." Let us all be ready that we may go in through the gates into the city.

Some of you, alas! are not able to feel the joy which this subject excites in our breasts. You cannot take delight in the throne of God and of the Lamb. God grant you may. Come, now, to the throne of grace with open confession and secret contrition. It is the throne of God, who knows the nature of your sin; it is the throne of the Lamb, who bore the penalty of sin, and can put it away. Come to the throne of the Lamb that

was slain. I entreat you to come now. So shall you find peace and reconciliation, and you shall be made meet to enter into the joy of your Lord. I pray God to bless this whole congregation, for Jesus Christ's sake.

Amen.

SIXTY-SEVEN
THE HEAVEN OF HEAVEN

SERMON GIVEN ON AUGUST 9, 1868

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 22:4

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 14

“And they shall see his face.”

REVELATION 22:4.

THE Italians so much admire the city of Naples, that their proverb is. “See Naples and die;” as if there remained nothing more to be seen after that fair bay and city had been gazed upon. To behold the far fairer sight mentioned in the text men might well be content to die a thousand times. If it shall please God that we shall depart this life before the Master’s appearing, we may laugh at death and count it to be gain, seeing that it introduces us to the place where we shall see his face. “Thou canst not see my face and live,” said the Lord of old; but that was true of mortals only, and refers not to immortals who have

put on incorruption: in yonder glory-land they see the face of God and yet live; yea, the sight is the essence and excellence of their life. Here that vision might be too overpowering for the soul and body, and might painfully separate them with excess of delight, and so cause us death; but up yonder the disembodied spirit is able to endure the blaze of splendour, and so will the body also when it shall have been refined and strengthened in its powers by resurrection from the dead. Then these eyes, which now would be smitten with blindness should they look upon the superlative glory, shall be strengthened to behold eternally the Lord of angels, who is the brightness of his Father's glory and the express image of his person.

Brethren and sisters, regard the object of our expectations! See the happiness which is promised us! Behold the heaven which awaits us! Forget for awhile your present cares: let all your difficulties and your sorrows vanish for a season; and live for awhile in the future which is so certified by faithful promises that you may rejoice in it even now! The veil which parts us from our great reward is very thin: hope gazes through its gauzy fabric. Faith, with eagle eyes, penetrates the mist which hides eternal delights from longing eyes. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him; but he hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God;" and we, in the power of that Spirit, have known, believed, and anticipated the bliss which every winged hour is bringing nearer to us.

While our Lord was here below it would have been a great delight to spiritual minds to have seen his face. I can scarcely imagine, but perhaps some of you mothers can, what must have been the joy that flooded the heart of Mary, when for the first time she gazed upon the lovely face of the holy child Jesus. I suppose the infant Jesus to have possessed an extraordinary

beauty. A soul absolutely perfect as his was, must surely have been enshrined in a body perfect in its symmetry, and attractive in its features. The overshadowing Spirit, by whose miraculous agency he was conceived of the Virgin, would scarcely have created an uncomely body at all, and much less would he have fashioned an unlovely body for so delightful a person as the only Begotten of the Father. Methinks, as his virgin mother looked upon him, and as the wise men and the shepherds gazed into that dear face, they might all have said with the spouse of old, "Thou art fairer than the children of men." That manger held an unrivalled form of beauty: well may painters strain their art to paint the mother and her wondrous child, for the spectacle brought shepherds from their flocks, sages from the far-off land, and angels from their thrones— heaven and earth were alike intent to see his face.

It would have been no small joy, methinks, to have seen the face of Jesus of Nazareth in the years of his maturity, when his countenance beamed with joy. "At that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, Father, I thank thee." One would like to have basked in the radiance of a sinless smile: it was a vision fit only for the pure in heart to have traced the fair marks of joy upon the face of Jesus; and such a joy, so spiritual, so refined, so heavenly, so divine! "Father, I thank thee:" blessing God for that eternal decree of election by which he has hidden the things of the kingdom from the wise and prudent, and has revealed them unto babes, and saying, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." Equally rare must have been the vision which Peter and James, and John beheld, when they looked into that Saviour's face, and saw it transfigured, beams of light flashing from its every feature, and his whole person made to glow with a superhuman splendour. The favoured spectator might well be content to die upon that mount; it was enough to have lived to have beheld his glory so divinely revealed.

Beloved, have you not sometimes felt as I have, that you could have wished to have seen the Well-beloved's face even in its grief and agony? It was not long before the beauty of Jesus began to be marred by his inward griefs and his daily hardships. He appears to have looked like a man of fifty when he was scarcely thirty. The Jews said, "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" His visage was more marred, we are told, than that of any man, and his form more than the sons of men; for he took upon himself our sickness and bare our sorrows, and all this substitutionary grief ploughed deep furrows upon that blessed brow, and made the cheeks to sink, and the eyes to become red with much weeping. Yet fain would I have gazed into the face of the Man of Sorrows; fain would I have seen those eyes which were "as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk and fitly set;" those fountains of pity, wells of love, and springs of grief; fain would I have adoringly admired those cheeks which were as beds of spices, as sweet flowers, and those lips like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh; for all the suffering that he suffered could not take away from that marred visage its majesty of grace and holiness, nor withdraw from it one line of that mental, and moral, and spiritual beauty which were peculiar to the perfect man. O how terribly lovely that beloved face must have looked when it was covered with the crimson of the bloody sweat, when the radiant hues of his rosy sufferings suffused the lily of his perfection! What a vision must that have been of the Man of Sorrows, when he said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death"! What must it have been to have looked into his face, when his brow was girt about with the crown of thorns, when the ruby drops followed each other adown those bruised cheeks which had been spit upon by the shameful mouths of the scorners? that must have been a spectacle of woe indeed! But, perhaps, yet more ghastly still was the face of the Redeemer

when he said, "I thirst!" when, in bitterest anguish, he shrieked, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" Then, indeed, the sun of the universe suffered a horrible eclipse; then the light of heaven for awhile passed under a black tempestuous cloud. That face in such a condition we have not seen, nor shall see; yet, beloved, we shall see his face.

I could have wished to have been with Mary, and the holy women, and Joseph, and Nicodemus, when they took his blessed body from the cross and laid it in the tomb. O for one gaze into that poor pale dead face— to have seen how death looked when mirrored in that matchless clay; and how Jesus appeared when conquered and yet conquering, vanquished and yet victor, yielding up his body to the spoiler, to be laid for awhile in the treasure-house of the tomb, and yet bursting all the bars of the spoiler's den!

But, brethren, there was a glorious change, no doubt, in the face of our Lord when it was seen by divers brethren after the resurrection. It was the same face, and they knew him to be the same Christ. Did they not put their fingers into the nail-prints and thrust their hand into his side? Did they not know him to be veritable flesh and bone as they saw him eat the piece of fish and of an honeycomb? But the face was restored to its former majesty and radiance, for I suppose it to have beamed with the dawn-flashes of that light which now flames forth from it, of which John says, "His face was as the sun shining in its strength." There were, we believe, some soft unveilings of that unexampled glory which glorified saints, day without night, are perpetually beholding in heaven. That face was for the last time seen when he ascended and the clouds concealed him. Then, gazing downward, and scattering benedictions with both his hands, he appointed his disciples to be his witnesses, and bade them go and preach his gospel, for he would be with them alway, even unto the end of the world. Such was the face of

Christ on earth, and the remembrance may serve to inspire in us a holy panting after the beatific vision which the Lord hath promised us, and of which we are now about to speak as the Holy Ghost may graciously give us utterance.

First, this morning, I purpose, brethren, to bring before your minds the beatific vision itself— “They shall see his face;” then secondly, we shall dwell for a moment upon the surpassing clearness of the vision— “They shall see his face” — in a sense more than usually emphatic; then thirdly, upon the privileges, choice and precious, which are involved in the vision; and lastly, we shall have a word or-two upon those favoured ones who shall enjoy the sight— “They” and none other— “They shall see his face.”

I. First, then, THE BEATIFIC VISION.

“They shall see his face.” It is the chief blessing of heaven, the cream of heaven, the heaven of heaven, that the saints shall there see Jesus. There will be other things to see. Who dare despise those foundations of chrysolite and chrysoprasus and jacinth? Who shall speak lightly of streets of glassy gold and gates of pearl? We would not forget that we shall see angels, and seraphim, and cherubim; nor would we fail to remember that we shall see apostles, martyrs, and confessors, together with those whom we have walked with and communed with in our Lord while here below. We shall assuredly behold those of our departed kindred who sleep in Jesus, dear to us here and dear to us still— “not lost, but gone before.” But still, for all this, the main thought which we now have of heaven, and certainly the main fulness of it when we shall come there, is just this: we shall see Jesus. We shall care little for any of those imaginary occupations which have such charms for a certain class of minds that they could even find a heaven in them. I have read

fanciful periods in which the writer has found celestial joys to consist in an eternal progress in the knowledge of the laws of God's universe. Such is not my heaven. Knowledge is not happiness, but on the contrary, is often an increase of sorrow.

Knowing, of itself, does not make men happy nor holy. For mere knowing's sake, I would as soon not know as know, if I had my choice: better to love an ounce than to know a pound; better a little service than much knowledge. I desire to know what God pleases to teach me; but beyond that, even ignorance shall be my bliss. Some have talked of flitting from star to star, seeing the wonders of God throughout the universe, how he rules in this province of his wide domain, how he governs in that other region of his vast dominion. It may be so, but it would be no heaven to me. So far as I can at present judge, I would rather stop at home, and sit at the feet of Christ for ever than roam over the wide creation.

*"The spacious earth and spreading flood
Proclaim the wise and powerful God,
And thy rich glories from afar
Sparkle in every rolling star.
Yet in Christ's looks a glory stands,
The noblest wonder of God's hands;
He, in the person of his Son,
Has all his mightiest works outdone."*

If Jesus were not infinite we should not speak so; but since he is in his person divine, and as to his manhood, so nearly allied to us that the closest possible sympathy exists between us, there will always be fresh subjects for thought, fresh sources for enjoyment, for those who are taken up with him. Certainly, brethren and sisters, to no believer would heaven be desirable if Jesus were not there, or, if being there, they could not enjoy the

nearest and dearest fellowship with him. A sight of him first turned our sorrow into joy; renewed communion with him lifts us above our present cares, and strengthens us to bear our heavy burdens: what must heavenly communion be? When we have Christ with us we are content on a crust, and satisfied with a cup of water; but if his face be hidden the whole world cannot afford a solace, we are widowed of our Beloved, our sun has set, our moon is eclipsed, our candle is blown out. Christ is all in all to us here, and therefore we pant and long for a heaven in which he shall be all in all to us for ever; and such will the heaven of God be. The Paradise of God is not the Elysium of imagination, the Utopia of intellect, or the Eden of poetry; but it is the heaven of intense spiritual fellowship with the Lord Jesus—a place where it is promised to faithful souls that “they shall see his face.”

In the beatific vision it is Christ whom they see; and further, it is his face which they behold. They shall not see the skirts of his robe as Moses saw the back parts of Jehovah; they shall not be satisfied to touch the hem of his garment, or to sit far down at his feet where they can only see his sandals, but they “shall see his face;” by which I understand two things: first, that they shall literally and physically, with their risen bodies, actually look into the face of Jesus; and secondly, that spiritually their mental faculties shall be enlarged, so that they shall be enabled to look into the very heart, and soul, and character of Christ, so as to understand him, his work, his love, his all in all, as they never understood him before. They shall literally, I say, see his face, for Christ is no phantom; and in heaven though divine, and therefore spiritual, he is still a man, and therefore material like ourselves. The very flesh and blood that suffered upon Calvary is in heaven; the hand that was pierced with the nail now at this moment grasps the sceptre of all worlds; that very head which was bowed down with anguish is

now crowned with a royal diadem; and the face that was so marred is the very face which beams resplendent amidst the thrones of heaven. Into that selfsame countenance we shall be permitted to gaze. O what a sight! Roll by, ye years; hasten on, ye laggard months and days, to let us but for once behold him, our Beloved, our hearts' care, who "redeemed us unto God by his blood," whose we are, and whom we love with such a passionate desire, that to be in his embrace we would be satisfied to suffer ten thousand deaths! They shall actually see Jesus.

Yet the spiritual sight will be sweeter still. I think the text implies that in the next world our powers of mind will be very different from what they are now. We are, the best of us, in our infancy as yet, and know but in part; but we shall be men then, we shall "put away childish things." We shall see and know even as we are known; and amongst the great things that we shall know will be this greatest of all, that we shall know Christ: we shall know the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths of the love of Christ that passeth knowledge. O how delightful it will be then to understand his everlasting love; how without beginning, or ever the earth was, his thoughts darted forward towards his dear ones, whom he had chosen in the sovereignty of his choice, that they should be his for ever! What a subject for delightful meditation will the covenant be, and Christ's suretyship engagements in that covenant when he undertook to take the debts of all his people upon himself, and to pay them all, and to stand and suffer in their room! And what thoughts shall we have then of our union with Christ—our federal, vital, conjugal oneness! We only talk about these things now, we do not really understand them. We merely plough the surface and gather a topsoil harvest, but a richer subsoil lies beneath. Brethren, in heaven we shall dive into the lowest depths of fellowship with Jesus. "We shall see his face,"

that is, we shall see clearly and plainly all that has to do with our Lord; and this shall be the topmost bliss of heaven.

In the blessed vision the saints see Jesus, and they see him clearly. We may also remark that they see him always; for when the text says "They shall see his face," it implies that they never at any time are without the sight. Never for a moment do they unlock their arm from the arm of their Beloved. They are not as we are— sometimes near the throne, and anon afar off by backslidings; sometimes hot with love, and then cold with indifference; sometimes bright as seraphs, and then dull as clods— but for ever and ever they are in closest association with the Master, for "they shall see his face."

Best of all, they see his face as it is now in all its glory. John tells us what that will be like: In his first chapter he says, "His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow," to mark his antiquity, for he is the Ancient of days. "And his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." Such is the vision which the redeemed enjoy before the throne; their Lord is all brightness, and in him there is nothing to weep over, nothing to mar his glory. Traces there doubtless are upon that wondrous face, of all the griefs he once endured, but these only make him more glorious. He looks like a lamb that has been slain and wears his priesthood still; but all that has to do with the shame, and the spitting, and slaughter, has been so transformed that the sight is all blissful, all comforting, all glorious; and in his face there is nothing to excite a tear or to beget a sigh. I wish my lips were unloosed and my thoughts were free, that I could tell you something more of this sight, but indeed it is not given unto mortal tongues to talk of these things; and I suppose that if we were caught up to see his face and should come back again, yet should we have to say like Paul, that we had heard and seen that which it was not lawful for us to utter. God will not as yet reveal these things

fully to us, but he reserves his best wine for the last. We can but give you a few glimpses, but O beloved, wait a little, it shall not be long ere you also shall see his face!

II. Secondly, we turn to another thought— THE SURPASSING CLEARNESS OF THAT VISION.

“They shall see his face.” The word “see” sounds in my ears with a clear, full, melodious note. Methinks we see but little here. This, indeed, is not the world of sight; “we walk by faith, not by sight.” Around us all is mist and cloud. What we do see, we see only as if men were trees walking. If ever we get a glimpse of the spirit-world, it is like yonder momentary lightning-flash in the darkness of the tempest, which opens for an instant the gates of heaven, and in the twinkling of an eye they are closed again, and the darkness is denser than before, as if it were enough for us poor mortals to know that there is a brightness denied to us as yet.

The saints see the face of Jesus in heaven, because they are purified from sin. The pure in heart are blessed: they shall see God, and none others. It is because of our impurity which still remains that we cannot as yet see his lace, but their eyes are touched with eye-salve, and therefore they see. Ah, brethren, how often does our Lord Jesus hide himself behind the clouds of dust which we ourselves make by our unholy walking. If we become proud, or selfish, or slothful, or fall into any other of our besetting sins, then our eye loses its capacity to behold the brightness of our Lord; but up yonder they not only do not sin, but they cannot sin; they are not tempted, and there is no space for the tempter to work upon, even could he be admitted to try them; they are without fault before the throne of God; and, surely, this alone is a heaven — to be rid of inbred sin, and the plague of the heart, and to have ended for ever the struggle of

spiritual life against the crushing power of the fleshly power of death. They may well see his face when the scales of sin have been taken from their eyes, and they have become pure as God himself is pure.

They surely see his face the more clearly because all the clouds of care are gone from them. Some of you while sitting here to-day have been trying to lift up your minds to heavenly contemplation, but you cannot; the business has gone so wrong this week; the children have vexed you so much; sickness has been in the house so sorely; you yourself feel in your body quite out of order for devotion— these enemies break your peace. Now they are vexed by none of these things in heaven, and therefore they can see their Master's face. They are not cumbered with Martha's cares; they still occupy Mary's seat at his feet. When shall you and I have laid aside the farm, and the merchandise, and the marrying, and the burying, which come so fast upon each other's heels, and when shall we be for ever with the Lord—

*"Far from a world of grief and sin,
With God eternally shut in"?*

Moreover, as they have done with sins and cares, so have they done with sorrows. "There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away." We are none of us quite strangers to grief, and with some of us pain is an inseparable companion; we dwell in the smoky tents of Kedar still. Perhaps it is well that we should so be tried while we are here, for sanctified sorrow refines the soul; but in glory there is no affliction, for the pure gold needeth not the furnace. Well may they then behold Christ when there are no tears to dim their eyes, no smoke of this world to rise up between them and their Beloved,

but they are alike free from sin, and care, and sorrow. They see his face right gloriously in that cloudless atmosphere, and in the light which he himself supplies.

Moreover, the glorified see his face the more clearly because there are no idols to stand between him and them. Our idolatrous love of worldly things is a chief cause of our knowing so little of spiritual things. Because we love this and that so much, we see so little of Christ. Thou canst not fill thy life-cup from the pools of earth, and yet have room in it for the crystal streams of heaven. But they have no idols there— nothing to occupy the heart; no rival for the Lord Jesus. He reigns supreme within their spirits, and therefore they see his face.

They have no veils of ignorance or prejudice to darken their sight in heaven. Those of us who most candidly endeavour to learn the truth are nevertheless in some degree biassed and 'warped by education. Let us struggle as we may, yet still our surroundings will not permit us to see things as they are. There is a deflection in our vision, a refraction in the air, a something everywhere which casts the beam of light out of its straight line so that we see rather the appearance than the reality of truth. We see not with open sight; our vision is marred; but up yonder, among the golden harps, they "know, even as they are known." They have no prejudices, but a full desire to know the truth: the bias is gone, and therefore they are able to see his face. O blessed thought! One could almost wish to sit down and say no more, but just roll that sweet morsel under one's tongue, and extract the essence and sweetness of it. "They see his face." There is no long distance for the eye to travel over, for they are near him; they are in his bosom; they are sitting on his throne at his right hand. No withdrawals there to mourn over: their sun shall no more go down. Here he stands behind our wall; he showeth himself through the lattices; but he hides not himself in heaven. O when shall the long summer

days of glory be ours, and Jesus our undying joy for ever and ever? In heaven they never pray—

*“Oh may no earthborn cloud arise
To hide thee from thy servant’s eyes;”*

but for ever and for aye they bask in the sunlight, or rather, like Milton’s angel, they live in the sun itself. They come not to the sea’s brink to wade into it up to the ankles, but they swim in bliss for ever. In waves of everlasting rest, in richest, closest fellowship with Jesus, they disport themselves with ineffable delight.

III. The third part of the subject which commands our attention this morning is THE MATCHLESS PRIVILEGE WHICH THIS VISION INVOLVES.

We may understand the words “they shall see his face” to contain five things. They mean, first, certain salvation. The face of Jesus Christ acts in two ways upon the sons of men: with some it is a face of terror— “Before his face heaven and earth fled away.” It is written concerning him, “Who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap.” A sight of Christ’s face will be to the ungodly eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord. But if there are some men who shall see his face, who shall sit down and delight themselves in gazing upon the face of the great Judge upon the throne, then those persons are assuredly saved; they are abiding the day of his coming; they are dwelling with the eternal flame without being consumed; they are resting on the bosom of our God who is a consuming fire; and yet, like the burning bush of old, though glowing with the glory they are not consumed by the heat. O

happy men, who can live where others must expire; who can find their heaven where a carnal world must eternally find its hell! This is the first thing in the text. "They shall see his face;" then they are everlastingly safe."

The second privilege is, they shall have a clear knowledge of him. I have dwelt upon that thought before, and merely mention it to complete the summary. To look into the face of Christ signifies to be well acquainted with his person, his office, his character, his work. So the saints in heaven shall have more knowledge of Christ than the most advanced below. As one has said, the babe in Christ admitted to heaven discovers more of Christ in a single hour than is known by all the divines of the assemblies of the church on earth. O yes, our catechisms and our creeds, and even our Bible— all these reveal but very little of what we shall discover when we shall see his face. Our text implies also conscious favour. Was not that the old benediction, "The Lord lift up his countenance upon you"? He has lifted it up upon the glorified, and they see it world without end. Here it is our joy of joys to have the Lord smiling upon us, for if he be with us who can be against us? If we know that he loves us, and that he delights in us, it mattereth not to us though earth and hell should hate us, and men cast out our names as evil. In heaven, then, they have this to be their choice privilege. They are courtiers who stand always in the monarch's palace, secure of the monarch's smile. They are children who live unbrokenly in their father's love, and know it, and rejoice to know it evermore.

The fourth privilege involved in the text is that of close fellowship. They are always near to Jesus. They are never hoping that they are with him, and yet fearing that they are not; they have none of those inward struggles which make life so unhappy to some of us; they never say

"'Tis a point I long to know;"

But they see his face and are in hourly communion with their Lord. Perfect spirits are always walking with the Lord, for they are always agreed with him. In glory they are all Enochs, walking with God. There for ever and for ever they lie in the bosom of Jesus, in the nearest possible place of communion with him who redeemed them with his blood.

And this involves a fifth privilege, namely, complete transformation "They shall be like him, for they shall see him as he is." If they see his face they shall be "changed from glory to glory" by this face-to-face vision of the Lord. Beholding Christ, his likeness is photographed upon them; they become in all respects like him as they gaze upon him world without end.

Thus have I very briefly mentioned the privileges involved in seeing Christ face to face.

IV. We must conclude by noting WHO THEY ARE TO WHOM THIS CHOICE BOON IS AFFORDED BY THE DIVINE MERCY.

"They shall see his face." Who are they? They are all his elect, all his redeemed, all his effectually called ones, all the justified, all the sanctified. They are the tens of thousands and myriads who have died in Jesus, of whom the Spirit saith, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." Thank God we are not strangers to those who now behold his face. As we look back to the associations of our youth, and to the friendships of our manhood, we remember many whose privilege it has been to precede us, and to know long before us the things which we desire and expect so soon to learn. Some are taken away to see his face while yet young. We bless God that our babes shall have the same heaven as our holy sires; they shall not be placed in the back settlements of Canaan, but they shall with equal

clearness see the face of Jesus. Those dear boys and girls who learnt to love Christ and made a profession of his name in their youth, were never spared to reach the ripeness of manhood and womanhood, but they shall equally see his face with the gravest and most reverend fathers of the church. I read of no secondary joys. Whoever may have invented the doctrine of degrees in heaven I do not know, but I believe there is as much foundation for it in Scripture as there is for the doctrine of purgatory, and no more. All the saints shall see their Master's face. The thief dying on the cross was with Christ in paradise, and Paul could be no more. I like sometimes to think of heaven in the same way as old Ryland did when

he wrote his rhyming letter from Northampton—

*"They all shall be there,
The great and the small;
For I shall shake hands
With the blessed St. Paul."*

Doubtless so we shall. Whether dying young or old, whether departing after long service of Christ, or dying immediately after conversion as with the thief, of all the saints shall it be said in the words of the text, "They shall see his face." What more can apostles and martyrs enjoy?

Do you regret that your friends have departed? Do you lament that wife, and husband, and child, and father, and grandparent, have all entered into their rest? Be not so unkind, so selfish to yourself, so cruel to them. Nay, rather, soldier of the cross, be thankful that another has won the crown before you, and do you press forward to win it too. Life is but a moment: how short it will appear in eternity. Even here hope perceives it to be brief; and though impatience counts it long, yet faith corrects her, and reminds her that one hour with God will

make the longest life to seem but a point of time, a mere nothing, a watch in the night, a thing that was and was not, that has come and gone.

So we will close our sermon by observing that they who see his face already make only a part of the great "they" who shall see his face, for many of us here below are on the way to the same reward. So many as have felt the burden of sin, and have come to the cross-foot and looked to those five crimson founts, the wounds of Jesus; so many as can say, "He is all my salvation and all my desire;" so many as can serve him feeling that for them to live is Christ; so many as shall fight day by day against sin, and shall overcome through the blood of the Lamb; so many as by the eternal Spirit's power shall be kept by faith unto salvation—so many shall see his face. It is mine to hope to see it, and it is yours too. Beloved, the hope shall not be disappointed, it maketh not ashamed; we shall see his face, and that vision shall yield us perfect bliss.

I fear my text is not true of all here assembled. Just this word with the unconverted: I am afraid you may almost say with Balaam, "I shall see him but not now, I shall behold him but not nigh." For every eye shall see him, and they also which crucified him; and what will they say when they see him? These ungodly ones what will they do? They shall cry to the rocks, "Hide us;" and to the mountains, "Cover us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne." Ah, my dear hearer, what a dreadful thing it will be if that very face which is the heaven of your mother, and the heaven of your husband, or the heaven of your wife and of your child, should be the hell to you from which you shall desire to be hidden. Now it must be the case unless first of all you seek his face on earth. Certain Greeks said to the disciples, "Sir, we would see Jesus." I wish you had that same desire this morning in a spiritual sense, for he himself has said, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."

If you see him now by simple faith as your Saviour, you shall see him at the last as your King, your Friend, your Beloved; but you must first see him to trust him here, or you shall not see him to rejoice in him hereafter.

*“Ye sinners, seek his grace,
Whose wrath ye cannot bear:
Fly to the shelter of his cross,
And find salvation there.”*

May God, even our own God, bless you for Jesus' sake.
Amen.

SIXTY-EIGHT
ALPHA AND OMEGA

SERMON GIVEN ON DECEMBER 27, 1863

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 22:13

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 9

*"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the
end, the first and the last."*

REVELATION 22:13.

EVERY Sunday-school child knows that there is no great mystery hidden in the words "Alpha and Omega." We have here the names of the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, so that the sense would be, "I am A and great O," in the Greek, or in plain English, "I am A and Z." "Jesus is the Alpha and Omega—A and Z—the beginning and the end, the first and the last."

Our text demands no preface; indeed, I do not know how I

could venture to put a single letter before Alpha. Let us therefore come to our subject at once.

In three ways I shall talk of the text. First, I shall bring certain doctrines to it; secondly, we will look at the doctrines which are really in it; and then thirdly, at the lessons which naturally flow from it.

I. At the outset, WE SHALL BRING CERTAIN TRUTHS TO THE TEXT.

This is a much too common method of preaching, and one which I am very far from admiring as a custom. When some preachers get a text, the enquiry is not what truth is in the passage, but what sense shall they thrust upon it? Full often the poor text is served as a cook treats a bird; it is first killed, and then stuffed with any kind of fancies that the preacher may have chopped up ready to hand. By frankly stating that my first observations are not in the verse before us, I shall avoid sanctioning such methods of abusing God's Word. The thoughts to which I now give utterance, have been suggested by divers commentators, and certainly, if they be not the legitimate offspring, of the text are closely connected with it.

1. Of things which we may fairly bring to the text, let us notice first, that our Lord may well be described as the Alpha and Omega in the sense of rank. He is Alpha, the first, the chief, the foremost, the first-born of every creature, the Eternal God. Man by nature is not the first even among creatures, for angels excel him far; nor are angels the chief, for our glorious Lord infinitely transcends them. He who made is greater than they who are made; and he who sends is greater than those who are sent. Jesus Christ stands Alpha in honourable degree; no angel can vie with him. "Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent

name than they." "For unto which of the angels said he at any time, thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? . . . And again, when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him." As for the Son, he hath appointed him heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds, but of the angels it is asked—"Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

Alpha was frequently used by the Hebrews to signify the best, just as we are accustomed to use the letter A. We say of a ship, for instance, that it is "A1." So Jesus Christ may truly be said to be the Alpha, the first in this sense. Call him by whatever title Scripture has affixed to him, and he is the first in it. Is he a prophet? Then all the prophets follow at a humble distance, bearing witness of him. Is he a priest? Then he is the Great High Priest of our profession; he is the fulfilment of all that which the priest did but typically set forth. Let him mount his throne as king, then he is King of kings, and Lord of lords; "his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation." If he be the builder of his Church, he is the wise Master-builder; if a shepherd, he is the Great Shepherd who shall appear; if the corner-stone, he is the chief corner-stone—in fact, it mattereth not what title, or which character he beareth, he is in all these respects the Alpha, as much surpassing all things that may be compared to him, as the sun excelleth the stars, or as the sea exceedeth the drops of the dew.

But, beloved, though our blessed Lord is thus Alpha—the first—he was once in his condescension made Omega, the last. How shall I describe the mighty descent of the Great Saviour. Down from the loftiness of his Father's glory, and from the grandeur of his own divine estate, he stooped to become man. There is a vast distance from the Alpha of Deity, down to that

letter which stands for manhood; but to this he came, he was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death. But this is not enough; he stoops lower than man, yea, there is a verse in which he seems to put himself on a level with the least of all creatures that have life—he says, “I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.” His Father forsook him; the wrath of heaven rolled over him. He was so utterly crushed and broken, that he was poured out like water, and brought into the dust of death. Marshal the creatures of God in their order, in the dread day when Jesus hangs upon the cross, and you must put him for misery, for weakness, for shame as the last, the Omega. How marvellous is this tremendous sweep of his humiliation, that from the highest throne in glory he should descend into the lowest depths of the tomb. Death bringeth the creature to its very lowest degradation, and maketh it as though it were nought. Jesus died, and as I see the incorruptible body lying in Joseph’s sepulchre, I can but marvel that ever the great Alpha should come so low as to yield up the ghost, being subjugated beneath the power of the last adversary.

Now, this is not in the text, but it may be fairly brought to it I think, and, without any compulsion, it may shake hands with the passage as being near of kin to it.

2. We will make another observation which is not in the text, but which is still a very precious truth, namely, that Jesus Christ is Alpha and Omega in the book of holy Scripture. Open the first page, and a discerning eye will see Jesus Christ in Genesis. We know that the worlds were made by him, and as we hear that majestic sentence, “Let us make man in our own image after our likeness,” we at once discern him as one of the sacred Trinity. We go onward to the fall, and at the gates of Eden the promise of the woman’s seed consoles us; we advance to the days of Noah, and lo, we see the Saviour typified in the

ark, which bears a chosen company out of the old world of death into the new world of life; we walk with Abraham, as he sees Messiah's day; we dwell in the tents of Isaac and Jacob, feeding upon the gracious promise; we leave the venerable Israel talking of Shiloh on his deathbed; we see his seed brought out of Egypt, and eating the Lamb of God's passover; we reach the age of the law, and here the types crowd in upon us; but time permits not even a glance—suffice it to say, in brief, that we view the face of Jesus in almost every page, and behold his character painted to the life in nearly every book. Prophets and kings, priests and preachers, all look one way—they all stand as the cherubs did, over the ark, desiring to look within, and to read the mystery of God's great propitiation. In the New Testament we find our Lord the one constant theme of every page. It is not an ingot here and there, or dust of gold thinly scattered, but here you stand upon a solid floor of gold, for the whole substance of the New Testament is Jesus crucified. What would be left of the evangelists if you could remove Christ from them? What are Paul's Epistles if Jesus be taken away? The whole of the Pauline literature sinks in a moment if Jesus be withdrawn. And what have Peter, James, Jude, or John to write upon but the same subject? Is it not Jesus still? Do not shut the book too hastily, for see its closing sentence is bejewelled with the Redeemer's name. "Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." Brethren, we should always read Scripture in this light; we should consider the Word to be as a mirror into which Christ looks down from heaven; And, then, we looking into it see his face reflected as in a glass—darkly, it is true, but still in such a way as to be a blessed preparation for seeing him as we shall see him face to face. This volume contains Jesus Christ's letters to us, perfumed by his love. These pages are the garments of our King, and they all smell of myrrh, and aloes,

and cassia. Scripture is the golden chariot in which Jesus rides, and it is paved with love for the daughters of Jerusalem. The Scriptures are the swaddling bands of the holy child, Jesus; unrol them and you find your Saviour. Talk not to us of bodies of divinity—the only body of divinity is the person of Christ. As for theology, Christ is the true theology—the incarnate Word of God; and if you can comprehend him you have grasped all truth. He is made unto us wisdom; getting him you have the wisdom of the Scriptures. The quintessence of the Word of God is Christ. Distil the book—and reach its essential quality, and you have discovered Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, and the King of the Jews. He is the Alpha and Omega of holy Scripture.

3. Another fact is also sweetly true, although not perhaps in our text. Jesus Christ is the Alpha and Omega of the great law of God. Brethren, the law of God finds not a single letter in human nature to meet its demands. You and I are neither Alpha nor Omega to the law, for we have broken it altogether. We have not even learned its first letter—“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,” and certain I am we know but very little of the next—“thy neighbour as thyself.” Even though renewed by grace, we are very slow to learn the holiness and spirituality of the law; we are so staggered by the letter that we often miss its spirit altogether. But, beloved, if you would see the law fulfilled, look to the person of our blessed Lord and Master. What love to God is there! O brethren, where shall we find anything to be compared to it? “The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.” “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” “My meat and my drink is to do the will of him that sent me.” What love to man you find in him. Talk not of the good Samaritan; here is one who is better than he; the Samaritan did but give his wine and his oil, and his twopence, but Jesus gives himself—gives his heart’s blood instead of wine,

and the anointing of the Holy Spirit instead of oil, while for food he gives his own flesh and blood for poor humanity to feed upon. Jesus loved in such a way that, as we said on Thursday night, all the love that ever gleamed in human bosom, if it could be gathered together, would be but as a spark, while his great love to man would be as a flaming furnace heated seven times hotter than human imagination can conceive. Do not, beloved friends, if you are in Christ Jesus, permit legal fears to distress you at the remembrance of your failures in obedience, as though they would destroy your soul. Seek after holiness, but never make holiness your trust. Seek after virtue, pant for it; but when you see your own imperfections, do not therefore despair. Your saving righteousness is the righteousness of Christ; that in which God accepts you is Christ's perfect obedience; and we say of that again, in the words of the text, Jesus Christ is "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end." There is not a precept which he has not fulfilled in its widest sense. As for the spirit of the law, it breathes through his whole life of holiness and service; and as for the letter of the law, he hath carried it out to its extremity. The commandment may be exceeding broad, but not broader than the life of Christ; the law may ask perfection, but it could not ask and could not have a greater perfection than is found in the person of him whose name is, "The Lord our Righteousness."

Brethren, these three matters I cannot affirm to be in the text, but can you blame me for bringing them forward? They stand in such a near connection with the exact sense of the passage, that they cannot well be omitted. May the Lord bless them to you.

II. Now we will take the text itself, and show what are THE TRUTHS WHICH WE ASSUREDLY BELIEVE TO BE IN IT.

I. Our Lord Jesus is Alpha and Omega in the great alphabet of being. Reckon existences in their order, and you begin—"In the beginning was the Word." Proceed to the conclusion, suppose that all the universe has melted like the hoar-frost of the morning—imagine that all worlds are extinguished as the sparks from the forge—conceive that, as a painted bubble passes away for ever, so the whole creation has departed—What then? What is the Omega? Why assuredly Jesus Christ would still be "God over all, blessed for ever. Amen." This we are quite sure is in the text, because the expression "Alpha and Omega" is only used four times, and on the second occasion we find it in the eleventh verse of the first chapter of the Book of the Revelation, in a connection which leads us to conclude that it must relate to the eternity and self-existence of our Lord; for the seventeenth verse explains the eleventh thus, "Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." Those expressions manifestly refer to the eternity of Christ; to his self-existence, his having life in himself; to the fact that death did by no means destroy his self-existence, and that now since his resurrection he liveth for evermore, death hath no more dominion over him. Beloved, this is a great theme. When we begin to talk of the eternity of the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are overwhelmed by the glory of our subject. We need the eagle eye and the eagle wing of John to see and soar into heavenly things. I read the other day a work by an ancient author, and in the chapter upon the eternity of God I could not help noticing that there was hardly a word of more than one or two syllables, sure sign of the sublimity of the theme, and of the inability of man to see more

than its most simple outline. Will you go back six thousand years, when the world has newly emerged from darkness, will you fly on, if you can, through all the ages of the geological periods, if such there were. Can you journey back millions of years? Can you, can you, can you reach in spirit the time when as yet cherubim were not born, when the solemnity of silence had never been disturbed by song of seraph, when the unnavigated ether had never been stirred by the wing of angel? There is no world, no sun, no stars; space alone exists. Can you go further back till space is gone? You cannot. It is impossible; you are lost; for you can only think of space and time. But if you could by any stretch of imagination multiply the millions of years of which we dreamed just now, by another million times, and that a million million million times more, and those on still as far as ever human arithmetic can go, ay, and beyond the possibilities of angelic computation, yet even then you have not begun to fathom the eternity in which God hath dwelt alone. Certainly there was an age in which God was dwelling alone, not in solitude, for, as the fathers very rightly say, you must not use the term "solitude" in reference to God, since the three Divine Persons everlastingly delighted in each other, and so knew no solitude—yet there was and is an aloneness in our God, since he is before all things. Can your thoughts attain to that age of God in lonely glory: in that eternity we know that Jesus was. He, whom though we have not seen his face, unceasingly we do adore, was then the eternal Son. The Word was God. Jesus was Alpha. To fly as far in the other direction, when the little river of time shall have been absorbed into the deep ocean of eternity, when all the world shall have departed even as the motes which dance in the sunbeam are seen no more when the sunbeam is gone; yet still Jesus shall be the Omega. It has been well observed by Dr. Gill, that no doubt the words "Alpha and Omega" are comprehensive—they take in all the letters

between. Certainly God comprehends all creatures. God is that without whom there is nothing, and in whom are all things. Philo, the Jew, compares the great God to a tree, and all creatures to the leaves and fruits, which are all in the tree; but the metaphor is not complete, because you may remove fruit from the tree, but there can be no creature out of the power and will of God by which alone it can exist at all. If you remove the fruits from the tree, the tree has at least lost something; but if all creatures were destroyed, yet still the Lord would be as infinitely God as he is now; if the creatures were multiplied, God were no more—and if diminished, he were no less. The creatures may be likened to the waves, and God to the great sea; the waves cannot exist apart from the sea, nor the creatures apart from God: but no earthly figure of the Divine can be complete; for the waves are a portion of the sea, but the creatures are not God, nor do they contribute tribute to his essence or attributes. The sea would be diminished if the waves were gone; but if you could take all creatures away, God would be no less God, nor less infinite than he is now. In fact, the moment we begin to talk of infiniteness, we know nothing of diminishing or of increasing. O brethren, we must leave this subject in the silence of reverent humility, for my little boat is out of sight of shore already, and I must not venture further on this great and wide sea.

*“Great God, how infinite art thou!
What worthless worms are we!
Let the whole race of creatures bow,
And pay their praise to thee.”*

A deaf and dumb man in one of the institutions in Paris, was asked to write upon the slate his idea of God's eternity, and he wrote the following forcible lines. “It is duration without

beginning or end; existence without bounds or dimensions; present without past or future. His eternity is youth without infancy or old age, life without birth or death, to-day without yesterday or to-morrow." "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last."

2. Another truth is most certainly in the text, namely, that Jesus Christ is Alpha and Omega in the alphabet of creating operations. Who was it that began to make? Not an angel, for the angel must first be made. Did matter create itself? Was there an effect without a cause? It is contrary to our experience and our reason to believe any such thing. The first cause stands first, and the first cause is God in the divine Trinity, the Son being one Person of that Trinity. He is Alpha because his hand first of all winged angelic spirit, and made his ministers a flame of fire. He first made all things out of nothing. He moulded the clay from which man was made; all things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that is made. As he alone began, so his power maintains the fabric of creation; all things consist by him. Christ is the great iron pillar of the universe, and the creatures twine about him as the vine doth about its prop. These things are not, they vanish like a dream if Jesus withdraw his power. He upholdeth all things by the word of his power. Brethren, there may be creations going on at the present moment; fresh globes may even now be fashioned between the hands of Omnipotence, if so; in every one of these Immanuel hath a share. At this very moment new comets may be launched like thunderbolts upon their fiery way, but not without the Son of God. Human souls issue from the womb of creation every hour, but in their sustenance and sending forth the mighty God is ever present. On, on, on, as the works of God shall be enlarged and extended, as the universe shall grow on every side, Christ shall be there still; his Father's delight, with whom he taketh counsel—his equal, bearing with him the name

of Alpha and Omega. If this world shall be rolled up like a worn-out vesture, he shall roll it up; if the stars shall wither, it shall be at Jesu's bidding; if the sun shall be quenched, his breath shall blow out its coal; and if the moon shall be black as sackcloth of hair, Christ's hand shall extinguish the lamp. He shall do it all, even until the end shall come, for he is Omega as well as Alpha.

3. So again, beyond a doubt, our text intends that Christ is Alpha and Omega in all covenant transactions. Beloved, here is a theme worthy of many discourses from the most eminent divines. The thoughts of God, the eternal decrees, the inscrutable purposes of Jehovah, these are deep things; but we know this concerning them, that from first to last they all have a relation to Christ. Concerning our race and the elect out of it, the whole matter is encompassed in the person of the Redeemer. Speak ye of election? "Mine elect in whom my soul delighteth," is Christ's name. We are chosen in him from before the foundation of the world. Speak of our being predestinated to be sons—we are only made so in him who stands as the elder brother. Every separate individual of the chosen tribe stands only by virtue of an union which was established from of old between his person and the person of the Redeemer. Search for the celestial fountain from which divine streams of grace have flowed to us, and you find Jesus Christ as the well-spring of covenant love. If your eyes shall ever see the covenant roll, if you shall ever be permitted in a future state to see the whole plan of redemption as it was mapped out in the chambers of eternity, you shall see the blood-red line of atoning sacrifice running along the margin of every page, and you shall see that from beginning to end one object was always aimed at—the glory of the Son of God. The Father begins with exalting Jesus, and concludes with glorifying him with the glory which he had with him before the world was. How I do love the doctrines of

grace when they are taken in connection with Christ. Some people preach the Calvinistic points without Jesus; but what hard, dry, marrowless preaching it is. Oh, dear friends, the letter killeth; it breedeth in men a controversial, quarrelsome spirit; but when you preach the doctrines of grace as they are in Christ, as Dr. Hawker would have preached them, when you talk of them as Rutherford would have talked of them, oh, then, a holy unction rests upon them, and they become inestimably precious; and let every believer remember he does not get these doctrines as he should get them, unless he receives them in Christ. Everywhere the Lord Jesus is to be considered not as the friend of a day, or our Saviour only in his life on earth, but as the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world, the anointed Mediator set up from everlasting days. By faith I see him as the eternal Son of God; I see him standing in the purpose of the Father as the covenant head of the elect. I see him in due time born of a woman, but I do not forget that his goings forth are of old from everlasting, and that before the day-star knew its place his delights were with the sons of men. I see him; he cries "It is finished!" he bows his head, I do not, however, forget that he is not dead, but that when the world shall die and time shall conclude its reign, then he who is the Ancient of days shall live, and shall flourish in immortal youth. Alpha and Omega is Jesus Christ, then, in the eternal purposes and in the covenant transactions of God.

4. Jesus Christ is certainly Alpha and Omega in all salvation-work as it becomes apparent in act and deed. That this is the meaning of the text I am clear, because in the first passage where the Alpha and Omega occurs—namely, in the first chapter of the Revelation, eighth verse—you will see that all the works of salvation are ascribed to our Lord. Read the fifth verse, "Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first-begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him

that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him . . . I am Alpha and Omega.” Now, we have here a summary of the great transactions of saving grace. You have here that he loved us—loved us before the world was, with an everlasting love; you have next, that he washed us from our sins in his own blood, in which you have his redemption, and our consequent pardon, justification, and sanctification, all of which come to us through him. As for our glory, it is the result of his second advent, therefore, “Behold, he cometh,” makes him the Omega, as the “Unto him that loved us,” made him the Alpha. I need not repeat to you who know so well that “There is none other name given under heaven whereby we must be saved,” and that in no part or portion of that salvation can any other name be admitted into partnership with his. Jesus must begin. Jesus must conclude. It is very striking to observe the commencement and the perfection of the spiritual life both laid at Jesus’ door in the sixth verse of the twenty-first chapter—“I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.” So then, if you have any thirst, you must come to Jesus Christ at the beginning, to get the water of life. If you have been led to know your own emptiness—if you have received from his Spirit a hungering and a thirsting after righteousness, go not to the law; look not within; but come to the Alpha, drink and be satisfied. If, on the other hand, life is near its close; if you have been preserved in holiness; if you have been kept in righteousness, remember still to trust in the Omega; for these words follow, “He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.” So that the inheriting of all things, the final overcoming of all spiritual foes, through Jesus, just as did the

first drink of living water. The first breath which heaves the spiritual lungs, the first light which greets the newly-opened - opened eye, comes from Jesus who is the beginning; and the last shout of faith, the last shout of holy joy which shall admit the saints into the paradise of God, shall proceed from him who is the end. Beloved, lay thou back upon Christ with all thy strength; lean on him with all thy weight. He who began will finish: he never was Alpha yet without being Omega too. Nothing shall change his purpose: neither heaven, nor earth, nor hell, can afford a motive to turn him from his way of love. "He is of one mind, and who can turn him? What his soul desireth, even that he doeth."

5. There is one more truth which I conceive to be in the text. Jesus is Alpha and Omega not only in the individual salvation of every saint, but in the whole chain of the Church's history. Where shall I say that the Church began? Why, very speedily after there was a seed of the serpent, there was also a seed of the woman. Surely the line of demarcation began hard by the gates of Eden; there we see Abel worshipping God in faith, and Cain who was of the wicked one and slew his brother. Do we not thus early see in Abel's sacrifice the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. Follow the Church through all her varied fortunes, and you will find her always bearing the banner of the Lion of the Tribe of Judah at her fore-front. No matter if she wanders about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, destitute, afflicted, tormented, Christ is still the day-star of her comfort. In her victories, his name is the loudest note; others may have slain their thousands, but the Son of David his ten thousands. No name wakes up the minstrelsy of Israel like the name of Messias, the coming one. Nothing can move the feet of Zion's maidens so joyously in the sacred dance; nothing can make the daughters of Jerusalem smite their timbrels to a more joyful strain than this—"He cometh; he

cometh who shall judge the world in righteousness, and his people with truth." Since the first advent of our Lord, has not the Church ever carried Jesus as her standard. Where will you find the Church without Christ? Jesus is yonder, among the snowy mountains of Switzerland, and his Church is with him though hel sons bear the approbrious names of heretics, schismatics, traitors, and worse. The Church of Rome had forgotten her first husband, and played the harlot, committing fornication with the kings of the earth; but there was a faithful bride found for the Son among the Albigenses and the Waldenses, in whose homes Jesus dwelt. What was their battle cry?—what the note they chanted round the family hearth?—what the name they pressed to their bosom when they dare not sing for fear the foe should fall upon them? Was it not the name of Jesus? And when the dark ages passed away, what light do I see gleaming yonder? What doth Luther proclaim? What doth Calvin teach? It is the great name of Jesus which is their common theme. What say you, brothers and sisters? do you not join hands in solemn covenant, and say to-day, "His name shall endure forever; his name shall be remembered as long as the sun." Do you not long for the time when "all nations shall be blessed in him, all people shall call him blessed?" Surely you yourselves will help to fulfil the promise, "one generation shall praise his name to another, and shall declare his mighty acts." But the end cometh; Jehovah's banner will soon be furled; his sword shall be sheathed for ever; the unsuffering kingdom shall be proclaimed; swords shall be broken, and spears shall be snapped; the sun shall look upon no battlefield, but shall greet the reign of universal peace. What then? Jesus' name shall then be known everywhere, men shall talk of him and think of him by day and by night. Prayer, also, shall be made for him continually, and daily shall he be praised. They who dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him, and his enemies shall lick the dust. Then

cometh the end. The judgment throne is set. The wicked are summoned. The righteous on the right hand have received their rewards—from whose hand? From the hand of the Omega who closes the chapter with his benediction, “Come, ye blessed of my Father.” Here are the wicked; hell is gaping for them; the tongues of flames lick up the multitudes as the lion devoureth his prey. Who is this that pronounces the thundering sentence, “Depart, ye cursed?” It is the Omega. That same face which once was bedewed with tears, is now brighter than the sun with flashes of lightning; the voice which said, “Come to me, ye weary,” now saith, “Depart, ye cursed.” He began—he ends—the Alpha is the Omega. But it is an end without end. Long, long through the ages of eternity, amid heaven’s perfect inhabitants, his name shall be the perpetual theme of song. Down there, amidst the howlings of the damned, they shall, against their will, declare his awful justice; they shall proclaim, in the eternal moanings, the power of the pierced feet which shall tread them as clusters in the winepress, until their blood floweth forth to the horses’ bridles. In eternity, heaven and earth and hell shall adore Jesus as Alpha and Omega. Hallelujah, hallelujah, Jesus Christ reigneth still as the Lord God omnipotent—Alpha and Omega!

III. By your patience we will notice A FEW THINGS WHICH FLOW OUT OF THE TEXT.

1. The first is this—Sinner, saint, let Jesus be Alpha and Omega to thee to-day in thy trust. Poor soul, art thou willing to be saved? But dost thou say, “I have not this qualification, or that recommendation?” Ah, do not begin with thyself as the Alpha. Come to Jesus as you are, and let him be Alpha to you. Are you black? Let him wash you. Is your heart hard? Let him soften it. Are you a dead good-for-nothing nothing soul? Are you ragged

and wretched? Are you lost, ruined, and undone; do not stop to write Alpha first; do not stop to begin your own salvation. Sinner, remember there is no preparation wanted for Christ. Just lean upon him wholly. Take him to begin with—nay let him take thee to begin with. Drop into his arms now, repose upon him now, you will never get the true salvation unless the first letter in it be Christ, for he is the Alpha. It will all have to be begun over again if you begin with humblings, with repentings, with convictions, or with anything but Christ; it must all be done over again, I say, unless you begin with Jesus. There he is. His wounds are flowing, his heart is breaking, his soul is in anguish—there is the Alpha of your salvation. Look and live. “Look unto me and be ye saved all ye ends of the earth.” Child of God, let him be the Omega of your salvation. If you have begun with him, do not now confide in yourself. Shall I say to you as Paul did to the Galatians, “Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect in the flesh?” “As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.” Your first hope was through looking to Jesus, will you now look to your sanctifications, to your prayings, to your evidences, to your humblings, to your communings. Away with all these, if they pretend to be the ground of your soul's comfort. Remember, child of God, that to the end of the chapter it must be as it was in the beginning—

*“None but Jesus, none but Jesus,
Can do helpless sinners good.”*

Up in that chamber of yours, with strong cryings and tears you turned to God and you never had any comfort till you looked to Jesus only, and in that other chamber where you shall lie a-dying with the death-damp damp heavy on your brow—you shall have no comfort but Jesus only. You passed through

the river of conviction, and Jesus forbade your drowning; you shall go through the stream of death, and he shall still keep your head above the waves. Alpha and Omega should Christ be to every one of us as our trust this morning.

2. Beloved, if we have trusted him, let him be Alpha and Omega in our love. Oh, give him the first place in your love, young woman; may the Holy Ghost win thy young heart for my Lord and Saviour. Let the flower of thy heart be offered to him in the bud. O you, young children, who are your mother's delight, and your father's care, I pray that your first dawning days may be consecrated to the Saviour; let him be Alpha with you. I trust he is Alpha to some of us, and has been so for years. We can use the words of the Psalmist, "I was cast upon thee from the womb. Thou hast been my God from my youth up. Truly I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid." You who are growing old and grey-headed, let him have the Omega of your love. As you lean upon your staff, bending downward as if to salute your graves, bear loving recollection of all the years of his patience, and the days of his faithfulness to you. Breathe the prayer "Now, also, when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not." See to it that you forsake him not, but clasp him with an expiring grasp as the Omega of your soul's delight.

3. But, surely, brethren, our Lord should be the Alpha and Omega of our life's end and aim. What is there worth living for but Christ? Oh, what is there in the whole earth that is worth a thought but Jesus? Well did an old writer say, "If God be the only Eternal, then all the rest is but a puff of smoke, and shall I live to heap up puffs of smoke, and shall I toil and moil merely to aggrandize myself with smoky treasures that the wind of death shall dissipate for ever?" No, beloved, let us live for eternal things, and what is there of eternal things that can be chosen but our Lord? O let us give him next year the Alpha of our labour. Let us begin the year by working in his vineyard,

toiling in his harvest field. This year is almost over. There is another day or two left—let us serve him till the year is ended, going forward with double haste because the days are now so few. “Lord teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.” Let your time and your talents, your substance and your energies, all be given to my Master, who is worthy to be your soul’s Alpha and Omega.

4. Lastly, Jesus crucified should be the Alpha and Omega of all our preaching and teaching. Woe to the man who makes anything else the main subject of his ministry. “God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” Do not tell me you preach sound doctrine, you preach rotten doctrine, if you do not preach Christ—preach nothing up but Christ, and nothing down but sin. Preach Christ; lift him up high on the pole of the gospel, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, and you will accomplish your life’s end, but preach orthodoxy, or any form of doxy; if you have left out Christ, there is no manna from heaven, no water from the rock, no refuge from the storm, no healing for the sick, no life for the dead. If you leave out Christ, you have left the sun out of the day, and the moon out of the night, you have left the waters out of the sea, and the floods out of the river, you have left the harvest out of the year, the soul out of the body, you have left joy out of heaven, yea, you have robbed all of its all. There is no gospel worth thinking of, much less worth proclaiming in Jehovah’s name, if Jesus be forgotten. We must have Jesus, then, as Alpha and Omega in all our ministrations among the sons of men.

And now I am very conscious this morning that I have only ploughed the surface; I wish I could drive into the subsoil of such a glorious text as this, but I suppose that the ploughman who can do this, had need to have been caught up to the third

heaven, and even then would fail. Who shall know anything of God but those who have seen him, and have beheld his glory in heaven? As for us, our eyes are holden. We have Jesus among us, but we perceive not his excellent glory; but like Peter, and James, and John, we sleep while Jesus is transfigured. The theme is far too high for me. Who can know God but God? Who can reveal him but the only-begotten? And who can comprehend the fulness of him who is the beginning and the end, the first and the last? It is enough if we have a saving acquaintance with the Redeemer, enough for our peace and joy, but gracious Lord, teach us more.

Amen.

SIXTY-NINE
COME AND WELCOME

SERMON GIVEN ON OCTOBER 16, 1859

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 22:17

FROM: NEW PARK STREET PULPIT VOLUME 5

*"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let
him that heareth say, Come. And let him
that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let
him take the water of life freely."*

REVELATION 22:17

The cry of the Christian religion is the simple word, "Come." The Jewish law said, "Go, and take heed unto thy steps as to the path in which thou shalt walk. Go, and break the commandments, and thou shalt perish; Go, and keep them, and thou shalt live." The law was a dispensation of the whip, which drove men before it; the gospel is just of the opposite kind. It is the Shepherds dispensation. He goeth before his sheep, and he bids them follow him, saying unto them, "Come." The law

repels; the gospel attracts. The law shows the distance between God and man; the gospel bridges that distance, and brings the sinner across that great fixed gulf which Moses could never bridge. The fact is, as you will all have to learn, if you know anything of gracious experience, that from the first moment of your spiritual life until you are ushered into glory, the cry of Christ to you will be, "Come, come unto me." He will always be ahead of you, bidding you follow him as the soldier follows his leader. He will always go before you to pave your way, and to prepare your path, and he will bid you come after him all through life, and in the solemn hour of death, when you shall lie panting upon your bed, his sweet word with which he shall usher you into the heavenly world shall be—"Come, come unto me. Stretch thy wings and fly straight to this world of joy where I am dwelling. Come and be with me where I am."

Nay, further than this, this is not only Christ's cry to you; but if you be a believer, this is your cry to Christ—"Come! come!" You will be longing for his second advent; you will be saying, "Come quickly, even so come Lord Jesus." And you will be always panting for nearer and closer communion with him. As his voice to you is "Come," even so will be your prayer to him, "Come, Lord, and abide in my house. Come, and consecrate me more fully to thy service; come, and without a rival reign; come, occupy alone the throne of my heart."

"Come," then, is the very motto-word of the gospel. I hope to expand that word, this morning, to beat out the golden grain into goldleaf, and may God the Holy Spirit speak this day with his minister, and may some who have never come to Jesus before, now come to him for the first time.

Let us go at once to our text—"Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Now, there are four things very plain from our text, namely, that first, *there is a "water of life;"* that secondly, *the invitation is very wide—"Whosoever will;"* that

thirdly, *the path is clear*, for it says, "*Whoever will, let him come*;" and then again, that, fourthly, *the only rule that is prescribed is—let him take it "freely."* That is the only price demanded, and the only condition, which indeed is not a condition, but a death-blow to all conditions. "Let him come and take the water of life freely."

I. First, then, remember I am about to preach a very simple sermon this morning, dealing with simple souls. I am longing to see sinners brought to Christ, my heart yearns after the multitude of men who see no beauty in him that they should desire him. God has saved many in this place; may he be pleased this morning to bring some wanderer to the Father's house, through the merit of the Son's cross by the Spirit's influence. Well, then, THERE IS A "WATER OF LIFE." Man is utterly ruined and undone. He is lost in a wild waste wilderness. The skin bottle of his righteousness is all dried up, and there is not so much as a drop of water in it. The heavens refuse him rain, and the earth can yield him no moisture. Must he perish? He looks aloft, beneath, around, and he discovers no means of escape. Must he die? Must thirst devour him? Must he fall upon the desert and leave his bones to bleach under the hot sun? No; for the text declares there is a fountain of life. Ordained in old eternity by God in solemn covenant, this fountain, this divine well, takes its spring from the deep foundations of God's decrees. It gusheth up from the depth which coucheth beneath, it cometh from that place which the eagle's eye hath not seen, and which the lion's whelp hath not passed over. The deep foundations of Godly government, the depth, of his own essential goodness and of his divine nature—these are the mysterious springs from which gush forth that fountain of the "water of life" which shall do good a to man. The Son hath digged this well and bored through massive rocks which prevented this living water from springing upward. Using his cross as the grand instrument he

has pierced through rocks, he has himself descended to the lowest depth, and he hath broken a passage by which the love and grace of God, the living water which can save the soul, may well up and overflow to quench the thirst of dying men. The Son hath bidden this fountain freely flow, hath removed the stone which laid upon the mouth thereof, and now having ascended upon high he standeth there to see that the fountain shall never stay its life-giving course, that its floods shall never be dry, that its depths shall never be exhausted. This sacred fountain, established according to God's good will and pleasure in the covenant, opened by Christ when he died upon the cross, floweth this day to give life and health, and joy and peace to poor sinners dead in sin, and ruined by the fall. There is a "water of life."

Let us pause awhile and look at its floods as they come gushing upwards, overflowing on every side, and assuaging men's thirst. Let us look with joyous eye. It is called the "water of life," and richly doth it deserve its name. God's favor is life, and in his presence there is pleasure for evermore; but this water is God's favor, and consequently life. By this water of life is intended God's free grace, God's love for men, so, that if you come and drink, you shall find this to be life indeed to your soul, for in drinking of God's grace you inherit God's love, you are reconciled to God, God stands in a fatherly relation to you, he loves you, and his great infinite heart yearns towards you.

Again, it is living water not simply because it is love, and that is life, but it saves from impending death. The sinner knows that he must die because he is filthy. He has committed sins so tremendous that God must punish him. God must cease to be just if he does not punish the sins of man. Man when conscious that he has been very guilty, stands shivering in the presence of his Maker, feeling in his soul that his doom is signed, and sealed, and that he must certainly be cast away

from all hope, and life, and joy. Come hither then ye sin-doomed; this water can wash away your sins, and when your sins are washed away, then shall ye live; for the innocent must not be punished. Here is water that can make you whiter than driven snow. What though you be black as Kedar's smoky tents, here is water that can purge you, and wash you to the whiteness of perfection, and make you fair as the curtains of king Solomon. These waters well deserve the name of life, since pardon is a condition of life. Unpardoned we die, we perish, we sink into the depths of hell; pardoned we live, we rise, we ascend to the very heights of heaven. See here, then, this ever-gushing fountain will give to all who take thereof life from the dead, by the pardon of their sins.

"But," saith the poor convicted soul, "This is not all I want, for if all the sins I have ever committed were blotted out, in one ten minutes I should commit many more. If I were now completely pardoned, it would not be many seconds before I should destroy my soul and sink helplessly again." Ay! but see here this is living water, it can quench thy thirst of sin; entering into thy soul it shall overcome and cover with its floods thy propensities to evil. It shall cover them first, it shall afterwards drown them, and at last, it shall utterly carry them away, sucking them into its whirlpool-depths where they shall never be found any more for ever. Oh sinners! this fountain of gospel grace can so wash your hearts that you shall no longer love sin, yea, so perfectly can this water refine the soul that it shall one day make you as spotless as the angels who stand before the throne of God, and you too, like them, shall obey the behests of God, hearkening to his commands, and rejoicing to be his servants. This is life indeed, for here is a favor, here is pardon, here is sanctity, the renewing of the soul by the washing of water, through the Word.

"But," saith one, "I have a longing within me which I cannot

satisfy. I feel sure that if I be pardoned yet there is something which I want—which nothing I have ever heard of, or have ever seen or handled can satisfy. I have within me an aching void which the world can never fill." "There was a time," says one, "when I was satisfied with the theater, when the amusements, the pleasures of men of the world, were very satisfactory to me. But lo! I have pressed this olive till it yields no more the generous oil; it is but the dreggy thick excrement thereof that now I can obtain. My joys have faded; the beauty of my fat valley hath become as a faded flower. No longer can I rejoice in the music of this world." Ah! soul, glad am I that thy cistern has become dry, for till men are dissatisfied with this world they never look out for the next; till the God of this world has utterly deceived them they will not look to him who is the only living and true God. But hearken! thou that art wretched and miserable, here is living water that can quench thy thirst. Come hither and drink, and thou shalt be satisfied; for he that is a believer in Christ finds enough for him in Christ now, and enough for ever. The believer is not the man who has to pace his room, saying, "I find no amusements and no delight." He is not the man whose days are weary, and whose nights are long, for he finds in religion such a spring of joy, such a fountain of consolation, that he is content and happy. Put him in a dungeon and he will find good company; place him in a barren wilderness, still he could eat the bread of heaven; drive him away from friendship, he will find the "friend that sticketh closer than a brother." Blast all his gourds, and he will find shadow beneath the rock of ages; sap the foundation of his earthly hopes, but since the foundation of his God standeth sure, his heart will still be fixed, trusting in the Lord. There is each a fullness in religion, that I can honestly testify from experience,

"I would not change my best estate,

For all that earth calls good or great."

I never knew what happiness was till I knew Christ; I thought I did. I warmed my hands before the fire of sin, but it was a painted fire. But oh, when once I tasted the Saviour's love, and had been washed in Jesus's blood, that was heaven begun below.

*"'Tis heaven on earth, and heaven above,
To see his face, to taste his love."*

Oh, if ye did but know the joys of religion, if ye did but know the sweetness of love to Christ, surely ye could not stand aloof. If ye could but catch a glimpse of the believer when he is dancing for joy, you would renounce your wildest mirth, your greatest joy, to become the meanest child in the family of God. Thus then it is the living water, it is the water of life, because it satisfies our thirst, and gives us the reality of life which we can never find in anything beneath the sky.

And here let me add very briefly, he who once drinks of this water of life, drinks that which will quench his thirst for ever. You shall never thirst again, except it be that you shall long for deeper draughts of this living fountain.

In that sweet manner shalt thou thirst. It shalt not be a thirst of pain, it shall be a thirst of loving joy—a happy thirst, you will find it a sweet thing to be thirsting after more of Christ's love. Become a Christian, and thou shalt be satisfied for life, thou shalt then be able to say, —"Return unto thy rest, O my son, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with thee." Thou shalt find an ever-living tree upon which thou shalt build thy nest, and no axe shall ever fell it, no winds shall ever shake thy quiet resting-place, but thou shalt rest for ever on the dear bosom of the Saviour where thou shalt find eternal rest, eternal

joy and peace. Oh, come and take of him, and drink of the water of life freely.

And, moreover, he who drinketh of this living water shall never die. His body shall see corruption for a little while, but his soul mounting aloft, shall dwell with Jesus. Yea! and his very body when it has passed through the purifying process, shall again more glorious than when it was sown in weakness. It shall rise in glory, in honor, in power, in majesty, and united with the soul, it shall everlastingly inherit the joys which Christ has prepared for them that love him. This is the living water; I see the fountain flowing now, freely flowing, sparkling with all these excellent properties. Who would not long to come and drink thereof?

II. In the second place we observe from the text that the invitation is very wide—"WHOSOEVER WILL, LET HIM TAKE THE WATER OF LIFE FREELY." How wide is this invitation! There are some ministers who are afraid to invite sinners, then why are they ministers! for they are afraid to perform the most important part of the sacred office. There was a time I must confess when I somewhat faltered when about to give a free invitation. My doctrinal sentiments did at that time somewhat hamper me. I boldly avow that I am unchanged as to the doctrines I have preached; I preach Calvinism as high, as stern, and as sound as ever; but I do feel, and always did feel an anxiety to invite sinners to Christ. And I do feel also, that not only is such a course consistent with the soundest doctrines, but that the other course is after all the unsound one, and has no title whatever to plead Scripture on its behalf. There has grown up in many Baptist churches an idea that none are to be called to Christ but what they call *sensible* sinners. I sometimes rebut that by remarking, that I call *stupid* sinners to Christ as well as sensible sinners, and that stupid sinners make by far the greatest proportion of the ungodly. But I glory in the avowal

that I preach Christ even to *insensible* sinners—that I would say even to the dry bones of the valley, as Ezekiel did, "Ye dry bones live!" doing it as an act of faith; not faith in the power of those that hear to obey the command, but faith in the power of God who gives the command to give strength also to those addressed, that they may be constrained to obey it. But now listen to my text; for here, at least, there is no limitation. But sensible or insensible, all that the text saith is, "Whosoever *will*, let him come and take the water of life freely."

The one question I have to ask this morning is, art thou willing? if so, Christ bids thee take the water of life. Art thou willing? if so, be pardoned, be sanctified be made whole. For if thou art willing Christ is willing too, and thou art freely invited to come and welcome to the fountain of life and grace.

Now mark, the question has to do with the *will*. "Oh," says one, "I am so foolish I cannot understand the plan of salvation, therefore I may not come and drink." But my question has nothing to do with your understanding, it has to do with your will. You may be as big a fool as you will, but if you are willing to come to Christ you are freely invited. If you could not read a single letter in the alphabet, or spell out a word in the book, yet may your lips—ignorant lips though they be—now drink of this water of life. It has nothing to do with your understanding; it does not say "Whosoever *understandeth* let him come," but "whosoever *will*," and I do not doubt but what there are many souls who when they first come to Christ have very little understanding of the way of salvation, and very little knowledge of the way in which he saves; but they come to Christ, the Holy Ghost makes them willing to come, and so they are saved. Oh ye who have been for many a year wearing the pauper's garb, ye who come here from the workhouse, ye that are ignorant, ye that are despised among men—are you willing to be saved? Can you say from your heart, "Lord, thou knowest I would have my

sins forgiven?" Then come and welcome. Jesus bids thee come. Let not thine ignorance keep thee away. He appeals, not to thine understanding, but to thy will.

"Oh," says one, "I can understand the plan of salvation, but I cannot repent as I would. Sir, *my heart* is so hard, I cannot bring the tear to my eye, I cannot feel my sins as I would desire.

*"My heart how dreadful hard it is,
How heavy here it lies;
Heavy and cold within my breast,
Just like a rock of ice."*

Ay, but this text has nothing to do with your heart; it is with your *will*. Are you willing? Then be your heart hard as the nether millstone if thou art willing to be saved I am bidden to invite thee. "Whosoever *will*," not "whosoever feels," but "whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely." "Yes," says one, "I can honestly say I am willing, but my heart will not soften. I wish that grace would change me. I can say I wish that Christ would soften my heart. I do desire that he would put the living fire within my cold breast and make me repent, and make me love him, and make me believe in him. I am *willing*." Well, then, the text is for thee, "Whosoever *will*, let him come." If thou art willing thou art freely invited to Christ. "No," saith one, "but I am such a great sinner. I have been a drunkard; I have been a lascivious man; I have gone far astray from the paths of rectitude. I would not have all my sins known to my fellow creatures. How can God accept of such a wretch as I am, such a foul creature as I have been?" Mark thee, man! There is no reference made here to thy past life. It simply says, "whosoever will," Art thou willing? Art thou willing to be saved? Canst thou say, "Now, Lord, I am willing to be saved, give me a new heart; I am willing to give up my sins; I am

willing to be a Christian; I am willing to believe and willing to obey, but oh for this no strength have I, Lord, I have the will; give me the power." Then thou art freely invited to come, if thou art but willing. There is no barrier between thee and Christ except thy stubborn will. If thy will is subdued, and if thou art saying "Yes, Lord, I am willing," then art thou freely invited. Oh, reject not the invitation, but, come and welcome, sinner come."

But saith one, "*I cannot* come, I cannot believe; I cannot do as I would." Well, but it does not say, "Whosoever *can*, let him come," but "whosoever *will*, let him come." Art thou willing? You know there is many a man that has more will than power, but God estimates us not by our power, but by our will. You see a man on horseback, he is in haste to fetch a doctor for some dying man: the horse is a miserable jade, and will not go as rapidly as the man would like, but you cannot scold him because you see him whipping and spurring, and thus proving that he would go if he could, and so the master takes the man's will for the deed. So is it with you, your poor heart will not go, it is a sorry, disabled jade, but it would go if it could. So Jesus invites you, not according to what you can, but according to what you will. "Whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely." All the stipulation is—Art thou willing—truly willing? If so, thou art freely welcome. Thou art earnestly invited to take of the water of life, and that freely too.

Surely as this goes round the hall, there will be many found who did answer to it, and who will say, from all their hearts, "I am willing; I am willing." Come let the question go personally round. Let me not talk to you in the mass, but let the arrow reach the individual. Grey head, give thy reply, and let you fair-haired boy answer also. Are you willing now to be saved—are you willing to forsake sin—willing to take Christ to be your master from this day forth and for ever? Are you willing to be

washed in his blood? Willing to be clothed in his righteousness? Are you willing to be made happy—willing to escape from hell, and willing to enter? Strange that it should be necessary to ask such questions, but still it is. Are you willing? Then remember that whatever may be against you—whatever may have defiled you—however black, however filthy, however worthless you may be, you are invited this day to take of the fountain of the water of life freely, for you are willing, and it is said, "Whosoever *will*, let him come."

"Ah!" saith one, "God knows I am willing, but still I do not think I am worthy." No, I know you are not, but what is that to do with it? It is not "whosoever is *worthy*," but "whosoever *will*, let him come." "Well," says one, "I believe that whosoever will may come, but not me, for I am the vilest sinner out of hell." But mark thee, sinner, it says, "*whosoever*." What a big word that is! Whosoever! There is no standard height here. It is of any height and any size. Little sinners, big sinners, black sinners, fair sinners, sinners double dyed, old sinners, aggravated sinners, sinners who have committed every crime in the whole catalogue, —*whosoever*. Doth this exempt one? Who can be excluded from this whosoever? It mattereth not who thou mayest be, nor what thou mayest have been, if thou art willing to be saved; free as the air thou breathest is the love and grace of God. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Thus have I tried to show you how broad the invitation is.

III. And now I am about to show you, in the third place, how clear the path is. "WHOSOEVER WILL, LET HIM TAKE THE WATER OF LIFE FREELY." That word "let" is a very curious word, because it signifies two opposite things. "Let" is an old-fashioned word which sometimes signifies "hinder." "He that letteth shall be taken away,"—that is, "He that hindereth." But here, in our text, it means the removing of all hindrance. "Let him come:"—Methinks I hear Jehovah speaking

this. Here is the fountain of love and mercy. But you are too unworthy, you are too vile. Hear Jehovah! He cries, "*Let him come*, he is willing. Stand back! doubts and fears, away with you, let him come; make a straight road; let him come if he be but willing." Then the devil himself comes forward and striding across the way, he says to the poor trembling soul, "I will spill thy blood; thou shalt never have mercy. I defy thee; though shalt never believe in Christ, and never be saved." But Christ says, "*Let him come*;" and Satan, strong though he be, quails beneath Jehovah's voice, and Jesus drives him away, and the path stands clear this morning, nor can sin, nor death, nor hell, block up the way, when Jehovah Jesus says, "*Let him come*."

Methinks I see several ministers standing in the way. They are of such high doctrine that they dare not invite a sinner, and they therefore clog the gospel with so many conditions. They will have it that the sinner must feel a certain quantity of experience before he is invited to come, and so they put their sermons up and say, "You are not invited, you are a dead sinner, you must not come; you are not invited; you are a hardened rebel." "Stand back," says Christ, "every one of you, though ye be my servants. *Let him come*, he is willing—stand not in his way." It is a sad thing that Christ's ministers should become the devil's aiders and abettors, and yet sometimes they are, for when they are telling a sinner how much he must feel, and how much he must know before he comes to Christ, they are virtually rolling big stones in the path, and saying to the willing sinner, "Thou mayest not come." In the name of Almighty God, stand back everything this morning that keeps the willing sinner from Christ. Away with you, away with you! Christ sprinkles his blood upon the way, and cries to you, "Vanish, begone! leave the road clear; *let him come*; stand not in his path; make straight before him his way, level the mountains and fill up the valleys; make straight through the wilderness a highway

for him to come, to drink of this water of life freely. '*Let him come.*' Oh, is not that a precious word of command! for it has all the might of Omnipotence in it. God said, "Let there be light and there was light," and he says, "Let him come" and come he will and must, that is but willing to come. "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." And now, sinner, remember God says, "*come.*" Is there anything in thy way? Remember, he adds, "*Let him come.*" He bids everything stand out of thy way. Standing one day in the court-house, some witness was required, I forget his name, it may have been Brown, for instance, in one moment the name was announced, "Brown, Samuel Brown," by-and-bye twenty others take up the cry, "Samuel Brown, Samuel Brown." There was seen a man pushing his way through, "Make room," said he, "make room, his honor calls me," and though there were many in his path, they gave way, because his being called was a sufficient command to them, not to hinder him, but to let him come. And now, soul, if thou be a willing sinner, though thy name be not mentioned—if thou be a willing sinner, thou art as truly called as though thou wert called by name, and therefore, push through thy fears. Make elbow room, and come; they that would stop thee are craven cowards. *He* has said "Let him come," and they cannot keep you back; Jehovah has said, "Let him come," and it is yours now to say, "I will come." "There is nothing that shall hinder me, I will push through every thing, and

*'I will to the gracious King,
Whose scepter mercy gives,'
I will go to the fountain and take of the water of
life freely.'*

IV. And now this brings me to the last head, the condition which is the death of all conditions—LET US TAKE IT

FREELY. Methinks I see one here who is saying "I would be saved and I will do what I can to be worthy of it." The fountain is free, and he comes with his halfpenny in his hand, and that a bad one, and he says, "Here, sir, give me a cup of this living water to drink; I am well worthy of it for see the price is in my hand." Why, man, if thou could'st bring the wealth of Potosi, or all the diamonds of Galconda, and all the pearls of Ormuz, you could not buy this most costly thing. Put up your money, you could not have it for gold or silver. The man brings his merit, but heaven is not to be sold to merit-mongers. Or perhaps you say "I will go to church regularly, I will give to the poor, I will attend my meeting-house, I will take a sitting, I will be baptized, I will do this and the other, and then no doubt I shall have the water of life." Back, miserable herd, bring not your rags and rubbish to God, he wants them not. Stand back, you insult the Almighty when you tender anything as payment. Back with ye; he invites not such as you to come. He says come freely. He wants nothing to recommend you. He needs no recommendation. You want no good works. Do not bring any. But you have no good feelings. Nevertheless you are willing, therefore come. He wants no good feelings of you. You have no belief and no repentance, yet nevertheless you are willing.

*"True belief and true repentance,
Every grace that brings us nigh,
Without money,
Come to Jesus Christ and buy."*

Do not try to get them yourself—come to him, and he will give them to you. Come just as you are; it is "freely," "without money and without price." The drinking fountains at the corners of our streets are valuable institutions; but I cannot imagine anyone being so foolish, as when he comes to the

drinking. fountains fumbling for his purse, and saying, "I cannot drink because I have not five pounds in my pocket." Why, however poor the man is, there is the fountain, and poor as he is he may drink of it. It is put there for the public. Thirsty souls as they go by, whether they are dressed in fustian or in broad cloth, don't look for any warrant for drinking; they come and drink of it freely. Here it is; the liberality of some good friend has put it there, and they take it and ask no questions whatever. Perhaps the only persons that ever need to go thirsty through the street where there is a drinking fountain, are the fine ladies and gentlemen who are in their carriages. They are very thirsty, and cannot think of being so vulgar as to get out to drink. It would bemean them, they think, to drink at a common drinking fountain, so they go with parched lips. Oh, how many there are that are rich, rich in their own good works, that cannot come to Christ. "I will not be saved," they say, "in the same way as a harlot or a swearer. What I go to heaven the same way as a chimney sweep! Is there no pathway to glory, but the path which a Magdalene may take? I will not be saved that way." Then you fine gentry may remain without. You are not bidden to come, for you are not willing. But remember,

*"None are excluded hence,
But those who do themselves exclude;
Welcome the learned and polite,
The ignorant and rude."*

"Whosoever wills let him come." Let him bring nothing to recommend him. Let him not imagine he can give any payment to God or any ransom for his soul; for the one condition that excludes all conditions is, "Let him come and take the water of life freely." There is a man of God here, who has drank of the river of the water of life many times; but he says, "I want to

know more of Christ, I want to have nearer fellowship with him; I want to enter more closely into the mystery of his sacrifice; I want to understand more and more of the fellowship of his sufferings, and to be made conformable unto his death." Well, believer, drink freely. You have filled your bowl of faith once, and you drank the draught off, fill it again, drink again, and keep on drinking. Put your mouth to the fountain if you will, drink right on. As good Rutherford says in one of his letters, "I have been sinking my bucket down into the well full often, but now my thirst after Christ has become so insatiable, that I long to put the well itself to my lips, and drain it all, and drink right on." Well take it freely as much as ever you can. You have come now into the field of Boaz, you may pick up every ear that you can find, nay more than that, you may carry away the sheaves if you like, and more than that, you may claim the whole field to be yours if you will. The eating and drinking at Christ's table is like that of Ahasuerus, only in an opposite way. It is said of that table, none did compel; it is said of this, none doth withhold: none can restrain. If there be a big vessel full of this holy water, drink it all up, and if there be one that holdeth twelve firkins, drink it, yea, drink it all, and thou shalt find that even then there is as much as ever. In Christ there is enough for all, enough for each enough for evermore; and none shall ever have need to say that there was not enough in Christ for him. Drink freely. So you see that there are two meanings—drink without price, and drink without stint.

Then, again, we have an old proverb that there are certain guests who come to our houses who are more free than they are welcome. They make free themselves, and go further than we can bid them welcome. But with regard to those who come to the fountain of living waters, you may make as free as you will and you are welcome; make as free as you can, take this water as you will, Christ will not grudge you. He that stands by the

fountain will never mourn because you drink too much; he will never be dissatisfied because such a black fellow as you has dared to wash himself in the living stream. No, but the blacker you are the more will he rejoice that you have been washed; the more thirsty you are the more will his soul be gladdened to have you drink even to the full and be satisfied. He is not enriched by withholding; rather he is enriched in joy by giving. It is as much a pleasure to Christ to save you as it will be to you to be saved. He is just as glad to see the poor, the lame, the halt, and the blind sit at his table as ever they can be to sit there. He is just as pleased to carry men to heaven as they themselves can be when they drink of the river of joy at the fountain-head of eternity, "Whosoever will let him take the water of life freely."

And now I do not know what to say further. My text is such a precious one that I cannot enter into the fullness of its freeness and sweetness. Remember, my dear friends, if you are willing to be saved, God requires nothing of you except that you will yield yourselves up to Christ. If you are willing to be saved none can prevent; there is no obstacle. You are not going like the daughters of Hobab to a well from which you will be driven by the coarseness and rudeness of shepherds. You are come where Jesus stands—stands with open arms, stands with open mouth, crying to you this day, "If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink, and whosoever will let him take the water of life freely."

And now will you refuse the invitation? See that you refuse not him that speaketh! Will you go this day and abuse the free mercy of God? Shall this very mercy lead you into more sin? Will you be wicked enough to say, that because grace is free, therefore you will continue in sin year after year?

Oh do not so; grieve not the Spirit of God; to-day is the accepted time; to-day is the day of salvation. If ye turn not he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready.

You have been warned, your conscience has often pricked you, now this day you are sweetly invited. But the time of warnings and invitations will not last for ever: they will soon be over, and when your funeral knell is tolling, you shall be in that lake of fire, that land of misery and pain, where not a drop of water shall ever cool your burning tongue. As you would escape from the flames of hell, as you would be delivered from the eternal torments which God will certainly hurl upon you like hail-stones, I beseech thee now consider thy ways, and if now thou art willing thou art invited and none can keep thee back from his mercy. "Whosoever will let him take the water of life freely." Shall I preach in vain? Will you all go away and not take the water of life? Come, soul—is there not one at least that God shall give me this day for my hire—not one? May I not take one of you by the hand, some poor sinning erring brother? Come, brother let us go together and drink. O may the Holy Ghost incline you. Take it my brother. See on that bloody tree Jesus hangs; behold he pays his life a ransom for your sins and mine. Believe on him, trust him, commit your soul to him and be saved. Will you not say in your soul

*"Just as I am without one plea
But that thy blood was shed for me
And that thou bid'st me come to thee,
O lamb of God I come, I come?"*

And as my Master is true and faithful, he cannot cast away one soul that cometh, for "him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." O Spirit, now draw reluctant hearts, and now give timid souls courage to believe for Jesus' sake.

Amen.

SEVENTY
THE DOUBLE “COME”

JULY 10, 1881

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 22:17

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 27

*“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let
him that heareth say, Come.”*

REVELATION 22:17.

WE have open before us the last page of the word of God. The Spirit of God will not dictate a single fresh line of truth. We have come to the last chapter, and very soon we shall reach the Amen. We are also, according to divine revelation, approaching the last page of human history. So short a time will elapse before the present economy shall conclude that the angel saith, “Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.” How shall the book finish? If we have come almost to its last verse, how shall it conclude? If we could have been

asked by the great Spirit of God, How shall it close? what would have been our reply? We must certainly have left it entirely to his infinite wisdom; but what suggestions might we have made? Shall it finish with a promise? It is well that it should, and there is the cheering word for the righteous, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." But if we close with comfort for saints, what about the multitude outside? what about the tens of thousands who are perishing? Does not our love to sinners suggest that there should be a word to them? Shall it, then, be a word of threatening, stern and vigorous, to awaken their consciences, and convince them of sin? Here it is: "Without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." Yet one does not like to finish with a sentence of exclusion. The Old Testament closes with the word "curse"; let not the New Testament conclude in the same fashion. What, then, shall it be? Shall the last sentences be full of tender invitation and earnest entreaty to the sinner, bidding him come to Christ and live? Yes, let it be so: and yet shall we forget the Lord himself while we are thinking of the sinner? He has told us that he will come,—should not the very last word of Scripture have a reference to him and to his glorious advent? Should not the Spirit at the last, as veil as at the first, bear witness to Jesus? Shall not the last word that shall linger in the reader's ear speak of the approaching glory of the Lord? Yes, let it be so; but it would be best of all if we could have a word that would combine the four: a promise to the righteous, a threatening to the wicked, an invitation to the poor and needy, and a welcome to the coming One. Who could devise such a verse? The Holy Ghost is equal to the emergency. He can dictate such a verse: he has dictated it. Here it is in the words of our text: "And the Spirit and the

bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come." That "Come" is a promise to the righteous, for at the coming of the Lord they shall have their portion and their glory, for "his reward is with him." That "Come" is a word of thunder to the wicked, for when he cometh he shall break them as with a rod of iron; he shall dash them in pieces as a potter's vessel. That "Come" is a word of invitation to the sinner: "Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the wafer of life freely." And yet it is a welcome to our Well-beloved; for when the Spirit and the bride say "Come," they invite the coming One, the Messiah whose second advent our heart desireth, to whom we cry, "Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus." I rejoice to find my text, set in the closing chapter of Scripture, closing it in such a way as wisdom alone could have dictated, comprehending all the things which are desirable in the finis of Holy Writ. Oh for grace to gather from this remarkable portion the instruction which it contains.

"Come," is the word of the Spirit and the bride, and our text urges us to let it be our word, too, if we have ever heard it. "Let him that heareth say, Come." In trying to open up this passage we shall notice, first, that here is a twofold ministry,—we are bidden to say, "Come"; but it is in a double sense: we say to Jesus, "Come," and we say to the sinner, "Come." Secondly, we shall notice how this twofold ministry is secured,— "the Spirit and the bride say, Come"; this is actually and perpetually done according to the ordinance of God. Then, thirdly, we shall see how this twofold ministry is to be increased,— let him that heareth add a new voice to that which is already speaking, and let him say, "Come"! In conclusion, you who are hearing ones shall have this twofold ministry urged upon you. May the Spirit of the Lord bless our discourse to him that heareth.

I. First, then, let us consider THE TWOFOLD MINISTRY. There is in the text a cry for the coming of the

Lord. If you read the verse in connection with that which goes before it you will be persuaded that the cry of the Spirit and the bride is addressed to the Lord Jesus concerning his second advent. As the echo of the Saviour's previous words, "Behold, I come quickly," the Spirit and the bride say, Come.

This cry is continually going up from the Spirit and from the Church of God; and the more gracious the season the more intense the prayer. Because we have the first-fruits of the Spirit we groan within ourselves for the glorious manifestation of our Lord. Just as the twelve tribes, serving God day and night, looked for the first coming, so ought all the tribes of our Israel, day and night, without ceasing, to wait for the Lord from heaven. We are looking for the blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" is the desire of every instructed saint. I shall not go into any details about when he will come: I will not espouse the cause of the pre-millennial or the post-millennial advent; it will suffice me just now to observe that the Redeemer's coming is the desire of the entire church; and "unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." The ministry of prayer for the coming of the Lord ought to grow more and more fervent as the years roll on; even as the watchers look for the morning the more eagerly as the night wears away. Certainly the time draweth nearer, and the event can hardly be far removed; therefore let the prayer be general and eager till our Lord heareth it.

*"Hark how thy saints unite their cries,
And pray and wait the general doom!
Come, thou, the soul of all our joys!
Thou, the Desire of Nations, come!"*

Let every one that hears the prophecy of our Lord's assured coming join in the prayer, "Thy kingdom come."

But there is a second ministry of the church, which is the cry for the coming of sinners to Christ. In this respect "the Spirit and the bride say, Come." It is a very sad calamity when any church ceases from its mission work; it is clearly out of fellowship with the Spirit of God, and has ceased to work with him. The cry of "Come" should never cease at any time or in any place; but it should be addressed to all men, as we have opportunity. The world should ring with "Come to Jesus! Come to Jesus! Come and welcome, sinner, Come." For this purpose the Spirit of God dwells among men, and for this purpose there is a church left on earth; if it were not for this the Holy Ghost might depart, and Jesus Christ might bear his saints away to dwell with him above. The Spirit abides here, and the church abides here, that together they may continually cry, "Let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

This, then, is the double ministry, and I want you to notice that the first call is not opposed to the second. The fact that Christ is coming ought never to make us any the less diligent in pressing sinners to come to Christ. I deeply regret when I see persons so taken up with prophecy that they forget evangelism. Trumpets and vials must not displace the gospel and its invitations. By all means pray fervently for the advent, and search the roll and see what the Spirit saith concerning it; but still look on the world that lieth in the wicked one, and let its sorrows command your tears, let its sins excite your zeal. Go out into the world and cry, "Come," and the Spirit of God will cry with you, and by your cry many shall be brought to Christ that they may live. A desire for the personal coming of the Lord is by no means antagonistic to the resolve to labour on in his absence, in the hope of subduing the world to his gracious reign.

Again, take heed that the second call never obscures the first. Albeit we are to seek sinners with all our might, and to compel them to come in to the marriage supper, yet we must not forget whose marriage it is, nor cease to pray for the majestic appearing of our Lord, the Prince of life. Despise not prophesying. Be taken up with evangelical work; let it fill your heart, and fill your hands, and fill your mouth; but, at the same time, watch for that sudden appearing which, to many, will be us unwelcome as a thief in the night.

Let the two comes leap at the same moment from your heart; for they are linked together. Christ will not come until he hath gathered unto himself an elect company; therefore, when you and I go forth and say to sinners, "Come," and God blesses us to the bringing of them in, we are doing the best we can to hasten the advent of the Son of man. Jesus will not descend till he hath borne long with the ungodly, until indeed his word shall have been preached throughout all nations for a testimony against them, and then shall the end be. Brethren, the two truths work together as a matter of fact, and we are not to dissociate them. Look for the Lord's coming, and then work towards that coming, by bidding sinners come to Christ and live. To my mind the doctrine of the coming of Christ ought to inflame the zeal of every believer who seeks the conversion of his fellow men, and how can he be a believer if he does not seek this end? The Lord cometh quickly: O sinner, come quickly to the Lord, or it may be too late for you to come. We who call you may soon be silenced by his advent, and mercy may have no more to say to you. "The oxen and the fatlings are killed, all things are ready, come to the supper before the wrath of the King shall be roused by your delays." We beseech you come at once, for the day of judgment will soon be ushered in.

I am sure that everybody who is eager to save souls will soon be driven to desire the advent. If we vehemently cry

“Come” to the ungodly, and see their rejection of the gospel, we shall at times become so cast down that we shall cry, “Come, Lord, and end this dreary age. Men reject and despise thee, and thy servants are distressed: it is time for thee to interpose, for they make void thy law.” Go into a heathen land and see their images, and preach to them concerning the true God; and when they reject your testimony you will be driven to cry, “Come, Lord Jesus.” Stand in a Popish country and see them altogether given to their idols, and worshipping crosses and relics, and you will soon cry, “Come, Lord Jesus. Let antichrist be hurled like a millstone into the flood, never to rise again.” The vehemence of your desire for the destruction of evil and the setting up of the kingdom of Christ will drive you to that grand hope of the church, and make you cry out for its fulfilment.

There is no need to say more about this twofold ministry; only let its two parts be evenly balanced; let there be prayer to our Lord,—“Come quickly!” and an equal measure of entreaty to sinners,—“Come to Christ!” Blend the two in wise proportion, and set both on fire. Tell of Christ’s coming to judgment, and then invite men to come to Christ for mercy. Warn them that he is on the way; but tell them that he waits to be gracious, and that while he lingers they have space for repentance. You will thus both drive and draw, both convince and comfort, and your testimony will have two hands with which to bear men to their Saviour.

II. And now, secondly, let us note that **THIS TWOFOLD MINISTRY IS SECURED**. According to our text, “The Spirit and the bride say, Come.” They always do say it, and always will say it till Jesus comes.

The Spirit says it. What a cry must this be which comes up from the Spirit of God himself! Given at Pentecost, he has never returned nor left the church, but he dwells in chosen

hearts, as in a temple, even to this day. With groanings that cannot be uttered he maketh intercession for us, and this is one of his intercessions, "Come, Lord Jesus." We are sure that Christ will come, if for no other reason, from this fact,— that the Spirit cries, "Come"; for the Spirit cannot plead in vain. This ministry of the Spirit is in part carried on by the Word of God. This Book tells us that Christ will come, and gives a thousand pleas for the Lord's coming, and for the sinner's coming to him. This is done by the Spirit also in his operations upon the human heart: he bears witness of judgment to come, and he persuades men to come to Jesus. He is always moving men to pray that Christ may come, and moving men to come to Christ. He dwelleth with us, and shall be in us, and in both the senses of the word the Spirit of God is evermore crying, "Come."

This also is certainly fulfilled by the church wherever she is a true church. Note, that here she is called "the bride." A bride is one that has been chosen from among others and set apart by love to be specially dear to him who chose her: so is the church chosen by God's eternal election and by the love of Christ, to be Christ's beloved for ever. A bride is one that, being chosen, is espoused. The covenant is an espousal of the church to Christ; and every conversion, every regeneration of each person making up the church, is, so to speak, a renewal of the espousal of the chosen to the bridegroom. A bride, however, is more than espoused, she is expectant of the marriage. It is not long before the wedding-day will come to one who is called "the bride;" and even so it is with the church. She is to-day beloved of Christ, chosen of Christ, espoused of Christ; and the time cometh when the marriage shall be consummated: "Blessed are they that shall sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb." Joy, joy, joy awaiteth the elect church of Christ. Ere long shall heaven and earth be filled with the splendour of the nuptials of the King of kings, when he shall take to himself his great power

and reign, and take to himself his bride, who shall then be called the Lamb's wife. Even to-day the church is the bride of Christ, reserved unto him alone. She hath no head but Christ; she owns no rule and sovereignty but that of Christ. This church, which deserves to be called "the bride," is always fulfilling the double ministry which lies in the cry of "Come." Her prayers rise to heaven incessantly for her Bridegroom's appearing.

*"Come, Lord, and tarry not;
Bring the long-look'd-for day;
Oh, why these years of wailing here,
These ages of delay?"*

And then she turns round to an ungodly world and she cries, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, let him come." So, you see, the church speaks up to her Lord that she may bring him down, and she speaks down to the world that she may bring sinners up to Christ.

Thus our God secures the ceaseless double ministry; for while the Spirit is upon the earth, and the church is yet among men, the two together will continually say, "Come."

Many things make it certain that the Spirit of God, and the bride of Christ, will always maintain their two-fold ministry. For, first, the sin of man grieves the Holy Spirit and moves him to say, "Come Lord," while he says to sinners, "Turn ye, turn ye, and come to Jesus." The church also is vexed with abounding sin: she is sorrowful to be compelled to dwell in the tents of Kedar, and the wickedness of men makes her cry aloud, "Come, Lord Jesus," while in pity to guilty man she cries, "Come and be cleansed from your iniquities." Thus sin provokes the double cry which will yet secure its overthrow.

The character of the two pleaders guarantees this perpetual ministry; for the Spirit of God is such a lover of holiness that he cannot but cry, "Come, Lord, and end the reign of sin!" He cannot but cry to men, "Haste away from your sins, and come to Jesus." The true bride of Christ also has such a delight in purity that from force of holiness she must evermore cry, "Come, Saviour, and end the reign of evil," and she must cry to men, "Come to Jesus, that you may live by his salvation."

Brethren, the love which the Spirit bears both to Christ and to men, and the love which the church also bears both to Christ and men, are combined in one force, and lead to the one cry. Because of this common love the Spirit and the bride must unitedly say, "Come," in the twofold sense. There is also the desire for Christ's glory which is in the heart of the Spirit of God. He delights to glorify Christ, it is his office so to do, and therefore he never will stay from the double work of crying, "Come, Lord!" and "Come, sinner!" The true church also desires Christ's glory. What a throne she would make for him! What a crown would she put upon his head! Therefore doth she cry, "Come, Lord, and reign!" and then she exhorts sinners to come and submit at his feet. There is also the longing for Christ's presence which the Spirit of God hath, and which the bride hath; for should not the bride long for the coming of the bridegroom? There are secret bonds of unity that bind both the Spirit and the bride to the great Bridegroom, and while there are these bonds we cannot wonder that they unitedly cry, "Come! come!" There is, moreover, before the Spirit's eye, and before the eye of the church, the future victory, the day when all things shall be under the feet of Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever. The Spirit worketh to this selfsame end. All his operations of conviction, or regeneration, or comforting tend towards the glorious triumph of the right and the true in the person of Jesus; while

the church laughs for joy of heart as she thinks of the splendour of the latter days, and sings like the spirits before the throne in the prospect of the conquest of the world by her glorious Husband. This prospect leads both the Spirit and the bride to say to Christ with groanings, "Come"; and to say to sinners with accents of entreaty, "Come unto him, that he may give you rest."

I think I have sufficiently shown the character of this twofold ministry, and how our God has provided for its continuance.

III. I want your practical attention, and your prayers, while we speak upon the way in which THIS TWOFOLD MINISTRY IS INCREASED.

"Let him that heareth say, Come." The hearing man is to say, "Come," but the unconverted man is not bidden so to do. I want you to notice the gradations. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come that is actually done. The man that "heareth" is bidden to say, "Come"; this should be done. But the man who is thirsting is not told to say, "Come." No, he cannot say "Come" till he has first come for himself. The exhortation, then, to say "Come" is only addressed to those who drink of the water of life. You that are not saved cannot invite others. How can you? You do not know the way, you do not know the blessing to be found in that way. A more pitiable being than a man who tries to preach before he is converted I can hardly imagine, and it is lamentable that there are in England hundreds of men ordained to the Christian ministry who themselves do not know what it is to be born again. They are preaching mysteries in which they have no fellowship. This is unhappy work and unlawful work. "Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes?" Yet all of you who have really heard the gospel with opened ear, and received the truth of God by faith into your souls, are called upon to cry, "Come." Every

man that has really heard and learned the Word of God, is to go forth, and bid others come to Christ.

See, brethren, how this perpetuates the cry. I have cried, "Come"; but my voice will be hushed in the grave ere long. Younger men who have heard through my voice, will cry, "Come" when I am silent, and those that hear them shall cry, "Come" when that generation shall have passed away. As in the old Greek games the athletes ran with torches, and one handed the light to another, and thus it passed along the line, so is it with us. Each man runneth his race, but he passeth the torch on to another that the light may never go out from generation to generation. "Let him that heareth say, Come." Let the fathers teach the children, and the children their children, and so while the sun and the moon endure let the voice that crieth, "Come" to Christ, go up to heaven, and let the voice that crieth, "Come" to sinners, be heard in the chief places of concourse.

This precept secures the swelling of the volume of the cry; for if every man that hears the gospel is to cry, "Come," then there will be more voices and yet more. What a feeble few they were who stood up at Pentecost, and by the mouth of Peter began to say, "Come." When each man went out to preach, though they spoke in all kinds of voices, they were but a few that said, "Come"; but ere the sun went down there were three thousand baptized into Christ, every one ready to say, "Come." Ere centuries had passed all Europe had heard the voice of those who said, "Come." "The Lord gave the word: great was the company of them that published it." If at this time we could only arouse all that hear the gospel to say, "Come," what a chorus it would be! All the world would hear it. If all who go down to the sea in ships knew the Lord, and would say, "Come"; ay, if every Christian traveller would take care to proclaim the gospel wherever he went, what holy voices would be heard in nations that as yet are ignorant of Christ! The

volume swells, the sound rolls like thunder along the heavens when all that hear it say, "Come."

And how the force of it is strengthened! When one man saith "Come," and tells out the gospel tale, men may doubt it. Another steps in and says, "Come," and in the mouth of two witnesses the whole shall be established. If another and another shall say, "Come," if each one shall bear witness to the sweetness and the love of Christ, many will be driven to Christ by the power of such repeated testimonies. There is a young man whose sister has been saved; he laughs at her. His mother is converted; he smiles at her. His father is converted; he begins to think. His brother is converted,— one after another, all in the house are renewed. They all beseech him; they pray for him; they tell him the way of salvation, and at last he must yield. When so many surround him the testimony is so strengthened that the Spirit of God blesses it to his conversion.

Consider, moreover, that not only does the testimony gain in strength, but the adaptation of it is remarkable. I may preach as long as I live, and I shall never do good to certain of you. It may be that I am not the man that God is likely to bless to certain peculiar persons. But if all that hear me would say Come, some man among you would fit them, or some woman at least would reach their case. If all would say Come, though the sinner is like leviathan, some weak place in his scales would be found out, and the sword of the gospel would come at him. The adaptation of the testimony is half the battle. Thus, dear friends, you see that there are great reasons why every one that heareth should say "Come."

Then would the word travel into strange places. The waiter at the inn and the sergeant at the barracks would become a blessing. The warder of the jail would bear the gospel to his prisoners; the nurse in the hospital would speak of Jesus to the sick. Places that never will be reached by the most earnest city

missionaries or ministers, will be open to the church, if every one that heareth will say "Come." Down in the bowels of the earth the miners sing and praise God when their fellow miner tells of Christ. In the palace Christ is made known when the humble porter at the gate talks of Jesus. Every place would be accessible to the gospel if all who heard it would say, "Come." We should then be as irresistible as the locusts when they go forth in bands. I have seen those creatures invade a land in swarms. They climb up the walls and down them, they march across the roads and pass over the rivers, and none can stand against them. If once the church of Christ were full of the Spirit of God, and ail that heard the gospel would say, "Come," we should be perfectly irresistible. The Spirit of God being with us, nation after nation would yield, Popery would be swept away, and errors would vanish; but because we forget this command, therefore the church languisheth, the darkness thickens, and the gloom threatens to deepen into everlasting night. In all this I fall back upon the divine guarantee in the first part of the text, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come"; but, oh, that God would move his entire church to fulfil her mission, and cause every one of her members to say, "Come!"

IV. I may not linger longer over this, for I must advance to the fourth part, which is the most practical. This is my point: **THIS TWOFOLD MINISTRY IS URGED UPON ALL WHO HAVE HEARD THE WORD OF GOD.** I will leave the point of saying "Come, Lord Jesus" till the close of the sermon, and as it is not easy to ride upon two horses at once, I will keep to that part of our ministry which consists in bidding the thirsting ones come to Jesus.

First, dear brother, dear sister, you who have with the ear of your inner nature heard the word of God, you are called to cry to others, "Come to Christ." You are called to this work by an obligation—the fact that you have received a very gracious

privilege. Somebody else brought the gospel to you, for faith cometh by hearing, and you heard the report, and therefore you live. Are you not under a moral obligation to carry the gospel to others that they also may hear it and be saved? Remember how many lived and died to bring you the gospel. Had it not been for men who burned at the stake, there might have been no gospel preaching in England; had it not been for those near and dear to you who loved you, and prayed for you, and wrestled for your salvation, you might have been in the midst of gospel light, and yet never have seen a ray of it. Are you not a debtor henceforth to all around you? Ought you not to repay your debt by labouring for others as others laboured for you?

Recollect, dear hearers, though it is no privilege to listen to my voice, yet it is a great privilege to hear the gospel. Prophets and kings desired it, but they heard it not. The clear manifestation of the glory of God in the person of Christ was known to none in old time as it is to you. The very least in the kingdom of heaven enjoys privileges greater than any of those who lived under the legal dispensation. Are you not grateful for this? Will you deny to the next generation the light which your fathers preserved for you? Above all, recollect that your ears have been opened by an act of sovereign grace. You might have been left as thousands are, to hear and not to hear; to listen to a voice, but not to perceive its meaning. But the Eternal Spirit, in the sovereignty of his grace, has visited you and given you a new life, and with it all the privileges of the children of God. Can you be indifferent to this? Will you not feel that now the precious seed must be scattered by your hand in the broad furrows of the world, out of gratitude to another hand that first gave the seed to you, and made it take root in the garden of your heart? Here, then, is your obligation.

Now, listen to your commission— “Let him that heareth say, Come.” A believer preaching in the street was accosted by

a gentleman who had been ordained to the ministry. Hands which belonged to arms decorated with lawn sleeves had been laid upon this gentleman's consecrated pate, and he was thereby made into an authorized minister. A wonderful thing this! How is it that those of us who were never the subjects of this solemn imposition manage to win souls for Christ? However, this man preaching the gospel in the street was stopped and asked by this successor of the apostles what right he had to preach; and he was not slow to give an answer. The preacher quoted this text — "Let him that heareth say, Come." "I have heard the gospel," said he, "in my own soul, and that is my permission to go and preach it, and I shall not be stopped by you." You who preach the gospel in the streets are often called lay preachers: but indeed you are as much God's clergy as any others: for the apostle Peter distinctly calls the whole church, or, if you please, the mere laity, God's heritage, or in the Greek, God's cleros, in that memorable verse addressed to ministers, which warns them against being "lords over God's clergy." All of you who believe in Jesus are God's clergy, and are authorized to speak the word in some form or other. Yea, the women have their places; even though they are forbidden to preach in the public assembly, there are times when they may address their own sex and others, much to the glory of God. Let them speak without fear, as often as God gives them opportunity, in their own modest, affectionate way. Let them tell of Jesus and his love. Somehow or other you are all to say, "Come," whether you be men or women, ignorant or learned, and here is your permit for doing it: "Let him that heareth say, Come."

But this verse is more than a permission, it is a commission; it means that the hearing man ought to speak, and this he should do personally. The text does not say, "Let them that hear say, Come," for what is everybody's business is nobody's business; but "Let him that heareth say, Come"— that is to say,

— each man who knows the gospel in his heart is bound to say, “Come.” When is he bound to say it? Why, now, at once. Let him that heareth say, “Come,” upon the first opportunity that presents itself. And when is he to leave off saying it? Never at all. Let him that heareth still say, “Come.” Let him begin to say it as soon as he has heard it, let him keep on saying it as long as he lives.

*“His only righteousness I show,
His saving truth proclaim;
'Tis all my business here below
To cry, ‘Behold the Lamb!’”
“Happy, if with my latest breath
I may but gasp his name;
Preach him to all, and cry in death,
‘Behold, behold the Lamb!’”*

This is your commission; mind that you attend to it. O ye commissioned officers of Christ, see that ye sound aloud your Master’s word.

Next, dear brethren, attend to this ministry, not only because you are under obligation to do it, and commissioned to do it, but because you are qualified to do it. “How?” say you. Why, your qualification is this,— that you have heard. A man can tell what he has heard. It has been thought by some that the qualification for preaching the gospel is great power of thought. Press your fingers upon your brow and fetch the doctrine out! Think on as hard as you can till you have brewed a new gospel. Produce a new gospel every six weeks. Ay, but that is not so, else were preachers few indeed. If you want a servant to answer the door for you who is never to come in and tell you who calls, but who is to answer the door according to her own sense and wit, you will have to pick a long while

before you find such a person. But if all you want is one who will tell you what is said, and then go and say to the person at the door what you tell her, you can find such a maid pretty soon. This last is the true idea of a preacher; he is to say what God says to him, and he must not go any further. If it is so said in the word of God let him repeat it. This makes preaching a humbler work than some think it, and yet a diviner power by far. We do not believe in the cry, "Every man his own saviour"; but we speak of the good old way, and of the only way. Yes, brethren, you are qualified to say "Come" to others because you have heard a voice saying "Come" in your own soul.

The text saith not, "Let him that has heard," but, "him that heareth,"— that is to say, let the man who is still hearing the voice of God speak. Hear, and then tell what you hear. I have seen pictures of a pope which represent him with a dove sitting upon his shoulder,— insinuating that he receives divine intimations. I am afraid that the bird is a raven in the case of these so-called heads of the church; but in the case of humble believers, the Spirit is present revealing Christ to the heart, and that which is revealed is to be spoken by us. There is your qualification; you have proved the truth of God in your own soul, and so can speak experimentally; you have found Christ; you have drunk the living water, and you can say, "Come." I wanted a drink one day in a thirsty place in Italy, and by the coachman's help I asked at a house for water. The owner of the house was busy and did not come to show me where the water could be found; but he sent a girl with me; she was very little, but she was quite big enough, for she led the way to a well, and I was soon refreshed. She had not to make a well, but only to point it out, and therefore her youth was no disadvantage. We have not to invent salvation, but to tell of it; and therefore you who are but babes in grace can perform the work. You have heard the

voice of Jesus say, "Stoop down, and drink, and live": go forth and echo that voice till thousands quench their thirst.

Your message is a very simple one: "Let him that heareth say"—a long and difficult sentence in Latin? No. Is he to repeat a very complicated piece of Miltonic blank verse? No. "Let him that heareth say, Come." "I can say that," says somebody. Mind you do, brother. Just go and tell people that Jesus died; tell them that "whosoever believeth in him is not condemned." Do not be too long over it, it is only one word, you know: "Let him that heareth say, Come" Be very earnest about it. There are many ways of saying it—mind you say it in the best possible manner. And then, as the message is very short, repeat it often:

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*"Tell me the story often,
For I forget it soon."*

Tell it over and over again, since it is all in one word, "Come." Mind you do not add anything else to it. Do not tell them to bring a price; do not tell them to prepare themselves, and to do this or that; but just say, "Come, Come, Come away from yourselves, Come away from your sins, Come away from your righteousness. Come to Jesus, Come to Jesus, sinner, Come!" It is a very short message.

And so I conclude by saying, Take care to recollect that yours is a two-fold ministry, and so when you have said "Come" to the sinner, mind you back it all up with prayer. Go home and say, "Lord, come to these poor sinners by thy grace: Lord, come, I pray thee, come, that this poor work of mine may be ended, because a greater work shall be accomplished by thy coming." Let your heart cry to your Lord, "Come;" for then you will not be engrossed with the world. No man will be anxious for Christ to come while he has everything he wants here below, and is

quite satisfied with it. The miser and the voluptuary do not want the Lord to come: they are so glued to this world that they dread anything that might change their relation to it. You must set loose by the world, or you cannot sincerely say to Jesus, "Come," and that is the very spirit of an earnest worker.

You must say, "Come," because you are ready to welcome Christ: that is the way in which to preach the gospel. I have no right to preach a sermon which I should be ashamed for Christ to hear. You and I ought so live that if our Lord were to come we should not be afraid, but should just go on doing what we have in hand. We ought to live so that if it were a part of the programme that Christ would come at twelve o'clock, we should finish life beautifully at that very hour, and look at the great Judge, and rejoice to appear before him. This is the spirit in which to go on saying "Come" to sinners. Hear the wheels of your Master's chariot behind you, then you will not be dull in preaching the gospel. Feel that men will soon have to stand before the judgment seat of Christ, then you will not be cold in your delivery. Expect that very soon you, too, must give in your account before the great white throne, and even think you see it, and see yourself and your hearers standing before it; then will you preach as though you ne'er might preach again, a dying man to dying men, and so the "Come" of prayer will help you when you deliver the "Come" of invitation, and you will be enabled to make full proof of your ministry.

I must add how pleased I was when I was seeing applicants who wished to join the church, to see that God is blessing many of you in the conversion of souls. One or two of the number were converted under my ministry out of some fifteen or sixteen; but the most of them were under your ministries: one and another of my beloved members had brought others to Jesus. I noticed four little rooms in and about Bermondsey to each of which God had been pleased to give conversions

through prayer-meetings, or the preaching of certain younger brethren. I am right glad of that, and I wish we had hundreds of such room and cottage meetings. This big city of London will never be evangelized by our great assemblies. If all the chapels were filled, which they are not, and if all the churches were filled, which they certainly are not, then a large proportion of the people could not get in. But, alas, they do not come to worship: they will not come. I do not think they understand some of my brethren, for they talk too grandly: some ministers have not learned to talk English, they speak a kind of French-Latin-English: it is not the Saxon English which the people know; and as they do not understand what is preached they do not care to come. The way to get at the masses is to reach them by twos and threes—I am sure of it. Get them into your houses, talk about Jesus Christ in your parlours, in your kitchens, in your bed-chambers, in the corners of the streets, anywhere. I am so glad that very many of you do so; go on and prosper. It will not matter whether I live or die if you all become ministers. Would God that all the Lord's servants were prophets. May every one of you live to win souls. "Let him that heareth say, Come." God help you to do it, for Jesus Christ's sake.

Amen.

SEVENTY-ONE
THE OFT-REPEATED INVITATION

SERMON GIVEN ON JULY 10, 1881

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 22:17

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 46

*“And let him that is athirst come. And whoso-
ever will, let him take the water of life
freely.” —*

REVELATION 22:17.

OUR morning's discourse was upon the first part of this verse: “The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come;” and I tried to show that everyone who has truly heard the gospel call is bound to go forth, and in his turn cry to others, “Come to Jesus.” But if every hearer of the gospel is to say, “Come,” certainly every preacher of it is specially called to repeat the invitation again and again. I seemed, this morning, to have it laid upon my own heart that, the very next time I

entered the pulpit, I must take care to make this call the burden of my discourse, as I ask you, dear friends, also to make it the burden of yours. "Let him that heareth say, Come;" but let him that preacheth say it with a more distinct emphasis than anyone else. So, to-night, I daresay that my message will appear to some of you to be monotonous, for I shall strike the same note again, and again, and again, and bring out from it only this one sound, "Come, Come, Come;" yet let me tell you that, if God shall bless that invitation, and sinners do come to Christ, there will be more music evoked from this note than if my sermon had been as brilliant as the highest human eloquence could make it, for angels in heaven and God himself will rejoice if sinners are brought to the Saviour.

People used to say of George Whitefield, — who commonly finished up his discourse by crying, "Come to Jesus," with his hands uplifted, and his eyes streaming with tears, — that, when he was hard up for an idea, he always cried, "O sinners, come to Jesus!" God be praised if all preachers imitate him in that respect when they are hard up for an idea, for I know of no idea that could possibly equal in value an earnest, simple, loving, gospel invitation. How that man of God would stand on Kennington Common or Moorfields, and cry, in trumpet tones, "Come, O come! Why will ye not come? Come now to Jesus"! The best of it is that his cries were not in vain, for the people did come; they came by hundreds and thousands unto him who said, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

I. In handling my text, I am going to make a few remarks, and this shall be the first of them. I call upon every unconverted person, here present, who hears the message of my text, to notice THE GREAT SOLEMNITY OF THE INVITATION: "Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

To my mind, the solemnity of this invitation lies partly in the fact that *it is placed at the very end of the Bible*, and placed there because it is the sum and substance, the aim and object of the whole Bible. It is like the point of the arrow, and all the rest of the Bible is like the shaft and the feathers on either side of it. We may say of the Scriptures what John said of his Gospel, "These are written," — all these books that are gathered together into one grand library called the Bible, — "these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." So far as you are concerned, this blessed Book has missed its purpose unless you have been led by it to come to Christ. It is all in vain that you have a Bible, or read your Bible, unless you do really "take the water of life" of which it speaks. It is worse than vain, for if it is not a savour of life unto life to you, it shall be a savour of death unto death. Therefore it seems to me that this is a very solemn invitation, because all the books of the Bible do, in effect, cry to sinners, "Come to Jesus." All the prophets of the Bible, all the apostles of the Bible, all the threatenings of the Bible, all the promises of the Bible, gather themselves up, and focus themselves into this one burning ray, "Come to Jesus. Come, and take the water of life freely." Oh, that it might burn its way right into your heart! It is the very end of the Bible, then, — the end of the Bible in two senses, — its end and its object that you should believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The solemnity of my text lies also in another thing, for *it might have been something very different*. It says, "Ye thirsty ones, come and drink the water of life." But shall I tell you what it might have said? Let me read to you the 11th verse of this chapter: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still." I am devoutly thankful that I have not to come to this rail, and to say to you, "My uncon-

verted hearers, you may listen to me if you like, but it will be of no use. You are unconverted, and so you always must be. You are unjust, and you always must be unjust. You are filthy, and you always must be filthy." God might have sent me with that heavy message of woe; but it is a sweetly solemn thought to my heart that, instead of doing so, he has bidden me say, "Ye unjust, come to the just One, and be made just by him. Ye filthy, come to the water of life, and wash and be clean." God is not yet dealing with you according to his infinite justice; it is mercy that rules this hour. Mercy is flowing through this place like a life-giving river; will ye not drink and live? No axe is yet uplifted to smite the sinner; it is still bound up in the rods that mercy has tied around it, and there is no order to unfasten the cords. Love, grace, welcome, — these are the sort of words we can still use; and I pray God that you may be glad that it is so, and give most earnest heed to these words lest you should have to listen to a message of quite another character. Look, for instance, at the 15th verse: "Without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." Did I hear you say, "We are not dogs, nor sorcerers," and so on? Perhaps you are not, yet you may be loving and making a lie; and you are doing so if you are trusting in your own righteousness, and cherishing the notion that you do not need a Saviour. If you who are unconverted do not need a Saviour, then the gospel is a monstrous folly, and the death of Christ upon the cross was a superfluity, not to be praised, but to be condemned. O sirs, do not love or make that lie; but now, while Christ is freely preached to you, come, I pray you, and listen to his wooing words! Take him now, and have him for ever.

Suppose that, instead of my having to say to you, "Come to Jesus," you heard a voice, loud as the thunder when the very heavens seem to crack and rend, shouting to you, "*Come to*

judgment.” Suppose you heard the trumpet of the archangel announcing that Christ had come from heaven with his mighty angels, “in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” You will hear it one day; you may hear it within an hour; you must hear it before long; and this will be the chief note of it, —

“Come to judgment!
Come to judgment, come away!”

Would to God that ye would listen now to the voice that cries, “Come to mercy! Come and find mercy now, that you need not fear the great day of judgment, come when it may.”

That, then, is my first remark, — that the invitation of the text has a very solemn setting.

II. Now, secondly, I want you to notice, in the invitation before us, THE SUITABILITY OF ITS PROVISIONS: “Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

That is just what you need; *your greatest need is life*. Merely to breathe, and eat, and drink, is not, according to God’s notion, living. That is a mere animal kind of life, and there is a far better and higher life than anything that men know about until God’s grace quickens them, and makes them truly to live. Life is needed by every unconverted man and woman; life, — not merely an outward change of life, or a reformation, but the reception of a new life by regeneration, as our Lord said to Nicodemus, “Ye must be born again.” There are some things that you may be or may not be, but this is a *must* be: “Ye must be born again.”

Our text speaks of “the water of life” which men are bidden to take, and which God most freely gives. It is called “the water of life” because *it quenches thirst*. A man may scarcely know

what thirst of soul really is even when he has begun to experience it; he has a sense of unrest, and a desire for something that he does not possess. He does not know what that something is, but he knows that something is lacking; that is one indication of thirst of soul. And when the Spirit of God comes, and deals with a man, he gets a still more intense sense of uneasiness and unhappiness, and the pangs of desire are still more acute within him. Thirst is a very strong form of desire. Hunger may be somewhat appeased by various expedients, but I have been told that the pangs of thirst are terrible in the extreme; when it really burns a man, it is like a fierce fire raging within him. So, when a soul wants, desires, longs, and pines for this unknown boon, it does not know what it really does want, but its one need is a Saviour. It wants renewal, it wants forgiveness, it wants life; and God here, in our text, presents the blessing to mankind under the figure of "the water of life," which removes the thirst of the soul, refreshes the drooping spirit, and cleanses the whole life. Oh, that men would but take it, and take it at once!

My dear hearer, let me assure you that, *in the gospel, there is exactly what you require*. Have you been trying to make yourself better, and yet you are conscious that you are no better? The gospel, received by faith, will make you better. Are you unhappy? Do you long to find something that will give you peace? The gospel would give you peace if you would only believe it. You say that you want to get away from your old sinful self, and to be made anew. Well, in the gospel that great work is provided for; and many here can testify that, by its means, they have been made new creatures in Christ Jesus. There is a black past in your history, that you would fain forget; but in the gospel there is revealed the fountain that can wash out all its stains. Perhaps some of you are dreading the dangerous future; but in the gospel there is ample protection

for all that lies before you. Possibly, to some of you, the present is a time of great darkness; but in the gospel there is light for the present; yes, joy even for this moment in which you seem to be driven almost to despair. When I preach about the water of life, so freely given by God, I mean just this, — that all you need between here and heaven Christ is ready to give you. All that your soul can possibly require to enable you to stand in the presence of God without fear, and to dwell in the bosom of God for ever, made perfectly like to God by his grace, — all that is in the gospel for you; and we are bidden to invite you to partake of it in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

I think the thought of the suitability of the provision of the gospel for me, is one that is worth dwelling upon. I have always felt, since I believed the gospel, that it was made on purpose for me. If it does not suit any other man, it exactly fits me; and if you try it, my hearer, you will find that it exactly fits you also. The Lord knows your measure, and he has made it just the right size and shape for you; there is not a particle of your being which the gospel cannot cover. There is not a wish in your heart, which ought to be there, that the gospel will not gratify. If you accept it, it will fill you to the brim with happiness, and you shall overflow with exceeding joy of heart in the treasure which Christ has brought to you.

III. But I must hasten on to notice, in the third place, THE FREENESS OF THIS GIFT, because our text says, “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

The gospel is priceless in value, but it is to be had “without money and without price.” The salvation of God can never be purchased. I am amazed that anyone should ever cherish the idea of a man buying a place for himself in heaven. Why, the very streets are paved with gold exceeding rich and rare, and a rich man’s whole fortune would not buy a single paving-stone in those golden streets. There is nothing that you can ever bring

to God as the purchase-money for salvation. He is infinitely rich; what does he want of yours? If thou art righteous, what dost thou want from him? The impossibility of salvation by human merit or good works ought to be clear to every thinking man. If we do all that God bids us do, we are doing no more than we ought to do, and even then we are unprofitable servants.

You may offer whatever terms you please, but God will never sell Christ. Judas did that; but the Father never will. He gives him freely to all who are willing to have him, but he will never sell him; he will never barter and chaffer with you concerning him, — so much alms and so much repentance, and then you shall have Christ. No, sirs; I tell you again that my Lord will never degrade his wellbeloved Son by bargaining with you about him. Will you have him for nothing? I hear people say, sometimes, that certain things cannot be had “for love or money.” Well, God will not give Christ for money, but he will give him out of pure love to you. If you will have him freely, and for nothing, the great transaction is done, he is yours, and you have him; but if you bring anything to pay for him, you cannot have him. If all the stars in the sky were worlds of gold, and you could carry them all in your girdle, and then take them out, and throw all those starry treasures down upon the floor of heaven as the price of a single gleam of divine love, you could not buy it. Solomon said, “If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned and if a man could give the whole universe, he could not purchase the love of God. No; yet you can have Christ for nothing, now, at once, just where you are, if you will take him on God’s terms. Will you have him? Oh, that we would as freely take as God freely gives! And why, since God is willing to give, should I be unwilling to receive? O my heart, my heart, my heart, why art thou unwilling to receive, — unwilling to be saved, — unwilling

to be pardoned, — unwilling to have Christ for nothing? Fool that thou art! I might truly say this of myself if I were unwilling to accept God's free gift. If I had some gold to give away to-night, I should not need to say much to induce you to have it. The other day, I saw a diamond, which was said to be worth a hundred thousand pounds; and if I had it here, and said, "Dear hearer, you may have it, and have it for nothing;" the only conceivable reason why any of you would hesitate to take it would be because you might not believe me. Otherwise, you would all cry out at once, "Thank you, sir; pass it over here; have you any more diamonds to dispose of on the same terms?" Everybody would be willing to accept it for nothing; but when we preach Christ and his gospel, then men want to buy the priceless treasure; they want to feel something, or to be something, or to do something, or else they will not have them. I have no warrant to offer Christ to any man in exchange for the payment of even a penny; but I do declare that he is to be given freely, according to my text, "Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely"

IV. Now I pass on to make a further remark, and that is concerning THE WONDERFUL SIMPLICITY OF THE WAY OF SALVATION. Two words describe it here: "Let him that is athirst *come*. And whosoever will, let him *take*"

Surely everybody understands those two words. Take the first: "*Come*," If a physician should advertise that every person who was sick might come to him, you would know what that meant. If you were sick, you would soon be at his door if you could anyhow get there, and you would put yourself into his hands if you believed him to be able to cure you. Treat the Lord Jesus Christ as you would treat an eminent physician; that is, go to him. "Where is he?" you ask. "I know how to go to an earthly physician, I either walk or ride to his house or consulting-room." Well, you can stand still, and yet come to Christ;

because we reach him by mental travelling, not bodily travelling. Think of Christ; that is the way to come to him. Think much of Christ; that is still further on the way to him. Believe him, believe in him, believe on him; — that is, trust him, and all is done. As soon as you have trusted Christ, you are a saved man, or woman, or child. That very trust of yours is an evidence that your heart is changed; you would never have trusted the Son of God with your soul if salvation had not already come to your house. Now, that is coming to Christ, — just putting yourself into his hands. The other word is quite as simple: “*Take.*” Everybody knows what it is to take anything; to take water, for instance, and the text says, “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” Well, what does a man do when he takes water? Perhaps he has a hand that trembles so much that he can hardly hold the glass or cup that contains the water, yet he takes it. Anybody can take water; there is no need to send a child to school to teach him how to take it; he puts it to his mouth, and it flows down. That is all; and that is exactly how, in a spiritual sense, we take the water of life, and take Christ himself. There is another passage, you know, which says, “The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth;” and, as I have often told you, when anything is in your mouth, and you want to keep it, the proper thing to do with it is to swallow it, that is all. I do not know how to make the process of receiving Christ more simple than that. You smile, dear friends, but the very essence of the gospel lies in receiving Christ like that; it is taking into yourself what God freely gives to you, that is all.

“Come, . . . take;” come, . . . take;” “come, . . . take;” — not run, fly, leap, bring; — no, “come, . . . take.” Oh, that you could all see how simple is this wondrous plan of salvation! The other day, there passed away one who had, as I judge, been a believer for years, but it had always been a question with her friends whether she was a believer or not; and she said to my brother,

when upon her death-bed, "The simplicity of the gospel has been a stumbling-block to me all my life; but now that I am about to die, instead of being a stumbling-block, it is my delight, for what should I do now without the simple gospel, 'Believe and live'?" She was a very good Churchwoman, one of the best I ever knew; she always observed all fast days and feast days, and did all manner of good things, she never seemed to do anything wrong, but always to do what was right. Yet those are just the people who find it difficult to yield to Christ, because of their self-righteousness. But whoever you may be, you will have to come down to God's terms if you wish to be saved. There is only one door to heaven, and but one way for the worst and for the best. You must bow down, and accept Jesus as the sinners' Saviour, or else you cannot have him at all. God's terms are, "Come, . . . take." So, do not try any other plan; do not say, "Well, I will bring something." Do not bring anything; it is not what you bring to Christ, but what you take of Christ that will save you. Therefore hear and heed the message of the text; God make you to hear it in your very soul! It is the true gospel message: "Come, . . . take."

V. My fifth remark is this, NOTICE THE BREADTH OF THE GOSPEL INVITATION: "Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

I will suppose that I am addressing a person who is very anxious about his soul; one who has been for weeks or perhaps for months seeking salvation, but who has not found it. I take him by the hand, and I say, "My dear friend, you are the very individual to whom my text refers. You know that the first part applies to you: 'Let him that is athirst come.' You have an earnest desire to be saved, you have that thirst of which the text speaks, so come, and take the water of life freely."

Yet even while I am speaking, I can see another brother, and I know that he is groaning, and saying, "Oh, I wish I had

that thirst! I wish I had that desire, but I have not any. I do not feel anything; all that I do feel is that I wish I did feel; but I do not feel at all." Come along, my friend, you are another of the very men that I am sent to seek, for the second part of the text says, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." The first net has somewhat wide meshes, so some little fish slip through it; but the second one has very small meshes. I wish it would catch the very smallest fishes, — the sprats or the white-bait, — I mean, those persons who have the least possible desire to be saved. "Whosoever will." "Whosoever will." "Oh! I am willing enough," says one, "but perhaps, after all, I am not one of those persons who are invited." Oh, but it says, "*Whosoever* will." I am very fond of that word "whosoever." I think that the translators have left "whosoever" out in some places; may the Lord forgive them, and teach them better! But we shall always keep it in even if they do leave it out; and I am sure it ought to be here: "whosoever will." It is a word that the Holy Spirit has blessed to thousands of souls, and he has not blessed a lie or a blunder, so I am quite sure that it is "whosoever will." We will stick to that, we must have that glorious word: "whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." "Oh, but he is a very poor man!" What does that matter? "Whosoever will." "But he is a very ignorant man, he does not even know his letters." What has that to do with the text? "Whosoever will." "Ah, but he has been a very bad man!" Well, what about that? It is "whosoever will." Does he will to trust Christ? Is he willing to take the water of life? Then, "let him take the water of life freely." "Oh, but!" says one, "he is an out-of-the-way sinner altogether; you do not know how shamefully he has behaved." No, and I do not want to know; but I do know that, if he will but take the water of life, he may do so, for the text says, "whosoever will." There is no limit to the mercy of God to all who trust his dear Son, and there is no limit to you but that which your own will

imposes. If you *nil* it, that is, make nothing of it, then it shall be *nil*, that is, nothing to you; but if you *will* it, it is God's will that you should have it. When your will is brought to accept the Saviour, then, depend upon it, it is God's will that you should have him. "Whosoever will." "Whosoever." I cannot conceive, in any language, a wider sweep of word than that; so come along, poor troubled sinner, come to Jesus Christ; accept him, and you shall be saved here and now.

VI. Now I close with the last remark, which concerns THE EARNESTNESS OF THIS CALL ON GOD'S PART: "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Who is the person that invites? Listen. First, it is *the Holy Spirit*, — gentle, loving, tender, gracious, mysterious, adorable, divine. He says, "Come." The Spirit that brooded over the chaos in the first creation, and brought forth order, says, "Come, and be made anew in Christ Jesus." Who is it, next, that says, "Come"? "*The bride*" — that is, the entire Church of God. All the people of God cry to you, "Come." Those on earth, and those in heaven, too; if you could hear them speak out of the excellent glory, you would know that the very joy they have in Christ moves them to call you to join them. They are leaning over the battlements of heaven, and beckoning you to Christ. The bride, that is, the whole Church in heaven and on earth, says, "Come, come."

And then, next, *everyone who hears the gospel* is bidden to say to you, "Come." Because the Lord knew how hard you would be to convince, he has told everybody who hears the gospel to try and bring you: "Let him that heareth say, Come." If you were to receive an invitation to a feast, it is possible that you would go the first time you were asked; but if you had a dozen letters inviting you to-morrow morning, you would say, "Dear me, this is very remarkable; I have twelve letters, from twelve different people, all inviting me to this banquet."

Suppose, when you went out of your door in the morning, there was a servant who stood there, and said, "Sir, I have come to invite you to the banquet." "Why, dear me!" you would say, "I have been invited a dozen times already." During the day, there comes a telegraphic invitation to this same banquet; perhaps you do not think much of that; but when you get home, your wife says, "Dear, I want to invite you to go to that banquet." You smile, and possibly you put even her off; but there comes in a dear child of yours, and he says, "Father, I have been to that gentleman's house to a banquet, and he has asked me to give you an invitation, and I do so want you to go to it." You could hardly refuse that; and if, every time you met fifty or a hundred people, they all invited you to go, you would at last say, "Well, I really must go; for it seems such a strange thing that everybody is inviting me." That is just the case with some of you here. We mean never to let you have any rest till you come to Christ. I have heard that there are some friends about this Tabernacle who "bother" people concerning their souls; and I hope they will keep on "bothering" them. They will not let them come and go out of this building without having an earnest word with them; I hope it will always be so. We have some brethren here who are sharpshooters; they are just now lying low in the rifle-pit, taking aim at some of you; and they will shoot at you before you get away tonight. I hope they will hit you, too, because whosoever hears the gospel is bidden to say to others, "Come." You will get girdled round with a ring of invitations, for God means to bless you; and, therefore, if you escape one, he will not let you escape another.

Listen further. *The Lord Jesus Christ himself says, "Come."* On one occasion, on the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." And another day our blessed Master said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give

you rest." So, here is Jesus calling, and the Holy Spirit calling, and his people calling; even the prophet Isaiah is still calling. Dear good man, he has been in heaven for thousands of years, yet at this moment he cries out of the holy Book, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Why, it is like the old ages, the ancient centuries, come back again to call to you to come to Christ. I hear that call from heaven. I hear Christ calling from the throne. I hear the Spirit calling. I hear the bride calling. I am calling as one of those who have heard the gospel for myself. Listen, then, oh, listen! Was there ever such a chorus of united invitation? Did ever so many hearts combine before about any one thing? Will you not come? Will you not come? Why will ye die? Why will ye die when the water of life flows at your feet? "Stoop down, and drink, and live." May God lead you so to do, for Christ's sake!

Amen.

SEVENTY-TWO
THE TWO “COMES”

SERMON GIVEN ON DECEMBER 31, 1876

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 22:17

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 23

*“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let
him that heareth say, Come. And let him
that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let
him take the water of life freely.”*

REVELATION 22:17.

OUR text stands at the end of the Book even as this day stands at the end of the year: and it is full of gospel even as we would make our closing Sabbath discourse. It would seem as if the Holy Spirit were loath to put down the pen while so many remained unbelieving, notwithstanding the testimony of the inspired word, and therefore ere he closes the canon of Holy Scripture and guards it against all addition or mutilation with

most solemn words, he gives one more full, free, earnest, gracious invitation to thirsty souls to come to Christ and drink. So on this last page of the year I would fain write another gospel invitation that those who have not hitherto believed our report may, even on this last day of the feast, incline their ear and accept the message of salvation. Ere yet the midnight bell proclaims the birth of a new year, may you be born to God: at any rate once more shall the truth by which men are regenerated be lovingly brought under your attention. I ask those of you who have the Master's ear to put up this request to him just now, that if the arrows have missed the mark on the previous fifty-two Sabbaths they may strike the target this time, being directed by the divine Spirit. Pray also that if some have kept the door of their hearts fast closed against the Lord Jesus till now, he may himself come in the preaching of the Word this morning, and put in his hand by the hole of the door, that their hearts may be moved for him. In answer to that prayer we shall be sure to get a blessing. Let us expect it and act upon the expectation, and we shall see men flying to Jesus as a cloud, and as doves to their windows.

Are not the words of our text the words of the Lord Jesus? Can they be regarded as the words of John? I think not, for they follow so closely upon the undoubted language of Jesus in the former verse. Thus runs the passage: — "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come." We can hardly, I think, divide the paragraph, and we must, it seems to me, regard our text as the words of the risen Jesus, that morning star whose cheering beams foretel the glorious day. The lover of men's souls had not quite done speaking to sinners; there was a little more to say, and here he says it. The divine Redeemer, leaning from his throne whereon he sits as the reward of his accom-

plished work, and bending over sinners with the same love which led him to die for them says, "Let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Looking at the words, therefore, in that golden light as coming from the dear lips of the Well-beloved, let us notice first, the heavenward cry of prayer—"The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come." These voices go upward to Christ. Then, secondly, let us hear the earthward cry of invitation—"Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely"; that cry goes outward and downward towards needy and sorrowing spirits. Then, thirdly, we shall pause awhile to notice the relation between these two cries; for the coming of Christ is connected with the coming of sinners: and then, as best we can, we shall observe and expect the response to the two cries; both from him who sitteth in the heavens and from souls thirsting here below. O divine Spirit, bless thou the Word.

I. First, then, our text begins with THE HEAVENWARD CRY OF PRAYER, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come." I think it will be evident, if you read carefully, that this cannot be interpreted as being only the voice of the Spirit and the bride to the sinner. Surely the sense requires us to regard this cry of "come" as addressed to our Lord Jesus, who in a previous verse had been saying, "Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me." We may see the second included in it, but it will never do to exclude the first. We shall not have dealt honestly with the words before us unless we regard them first as spoken upwards towards our Lord, whose coming is our great hope.

The matter of this cry is first to be noticed—it is the coming of Christ. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." This is and always has been the universal cry of the church of Jesus Christ.

There is no one common theory about the exact meaning of that coming, but there is one common desire for it, in some form or other. Some of us are expecting the bodily coming, because the angel said when the cloud concealed the rising Christ, "This same Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." We therefore look for his descent upon the earth in person, to be here literally among us. Some expect that when he comes it will be to reign upon the earth, making all things new and bringing to his people a glorious period of a thousand years, in which there shall be perpetual Sabbath rest. Others think that when he cometh he will come to judge the world, and that the day of his appearing is rather to be regarded as the end of all things and the conclusion of this dispensation than as the commencement of the age of gold. There are some who think the millennium all a dream, and the coming of Christ in person to be a mere fancy, but they believe that he will come spiritually, and they are looking for a time when the gospel shall spread very wonderfully, and there will be an extraordinary power about the ministrations of the word, so that nations shall run unto him and be converted to his truth. Now it would be very interesting to take up these various statements and speculations, but we do not want to do so, because after all, in whatever way men look at it, all the true people of God still desire the coming of Christ, and so long as he draws near they are content. They may have more or less light about the manner of it, but still the coming of Christ has been ever since the time when he departed the great wish and desire, yea and the agonizing prayer of the church of God. "Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus," is the cry of the whole host of the Lord's elect. It is true that some have not always desired this coming from motives of the most commendable kind, and many become more than ever earnest in this prayer when they have been in a

state of disappointment and sorrow, but still that which they desire is a right thing, and a promised blessing to be given in its time. I suppose the file of sorrow will always give a keener edge to the desire of Christ's coming. Luther on one occasion, when much discouraged, said, "May the Lord come at once! Let him cut the whole matter short with the day of judgment; for there is no amendment to be expected." When we get into this state of mind the desire, though right in appearance, may not be quite as pure as we think. Desires and prayers which grow out of unbelief and petulance can hardly be of the very best order. Perhaps when we more patiently wait and quietly hope, we may not be quite so feverishly anxious for the speedy coming, and yet our state of mind may be more sober and more truly watchful and acceptable than when we showed more apparent eagerness. Waiting must sit side by side with desiring: patience must blend with hope. The Lord's "quickly" may not be my "quickly"; and if so, let him do what seemeth him good. It may be a better thing after all for our Lord to tarry a little longer, that so by a more lengthened conflict he may the better manifest the patience of the saints and the power of the eternal Spirit. It may be the Lord may linger yet a while, and if so, while the church desires his speedy advent she will not quarrel with her Master, nor dictate to him, nor even wish, to know the times and the seasons. "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly," is her heart's inmost wish, but as for the details of his coming she leaves them in his hands.

Having noted the matter of the cry, let us next observe the persons crying. The Spirit is first mentioned— "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." And why does the Holy Ghost desire the coming of the Lord Jesus? At present the Spirit is, so to speak, the vicegerent of this dispensation upon earth. Our Lord Jesus is gone into the heavens, for it was expedient for him to go, but the Comforter whom the Father hath sent in his name hath

taken his place as our teacher, and abides on earth continually as the witness to the truth, and the worker for it in the minds of men. But the Spirit of God is daily grieved during this season of longsuffering and conflict. How much he is provoked all the world over it is not possible for us to know! The forty years in the wilderness must have become as nothing compared with nineteen centuries of rebellious generations. The ungodly vex him, they reject his testimony, and resist his operations. And, alas, the saints grieve him too. You and I have, I fear, grieved him often during the past year; and so he desireth the end of this evil estate, and saith to our Lord Jesus, "Come." Beside, the Spirit's great object and desire is to glorify Christ, even as our Lord saith, "He shall glorify me, for he shall take of mine and shew them unto you." Now, as the coming of Christ will be the full manifestation of the Redeemer's glory, the Spirit therefore desireth that he may come and take to himself his great power, and reign. The Holy Spirit seals us "unto the day of redemption," having ever an eye to that great event; his work tendeth towards its completion in the day of the appearing of the sons of God. He "is the earnest of our inheritance till the redemption of the purchased possession." Therefore doth the Spirit have sympathy in the groanings of his saints for the glorious appearing, and it is in this connection especially that he is described as helping our infirmities, and making intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. In this sense the Spirit saith "Come"; indeed, all such cries of "Come" in this world are of his prompting.

Our text next tells us that, "the bride saith, Come." We all know that the bride is the church, but perhaps we have not noticed the peculiarity of her name. It is not "The Spirit and the church say, Come," but "the Spirit and the bride," for she saith "Come" always more fervently when she realizes her near and dear relationship to her Lord, and all that it involves. Now,

a bride is one whose marriage is near, either as having just happened or as close at hand. She is far more than merely espoused— either she is married or about to be, although the actual marriage feast may not have been eaten. So is the church very nearly arrived at the grand hour, when it shall be said “the marriage of the Lamb is come and his bride hath made herself ready”; and because of that she is full of joy at the prospect of hearing the cry, “Behold, the Bridegroom cometh.” Who marvelleth that it is so? It would be unnatural if there were no desire on the part of the church to see her beloved Lord and Head. Is it not as it should be when the bride saith “Come”?

I wish to call your attention to the fact that while I have made two of the persons mentioned in the text for the purpose of discoursing upon them in due order, yet they are not divided in the passage before us. It does not say the Spirit saith “come” and the bride saith “come,” but “the Spirit and the bride say, Come.” That is to say, the Spirit of God speaketh by the church when he crieth “Come,” and the church, crieth unto Christ for his coming because she is moved thereto of the Holy Spirit. True prayer is always a joint work; the Holy Spirit within us writes acceptable desires upon our hearts and then we present them. The Holy Ghost does not plead apart from our desiring and believing; we must ourselves desire and will and plead and agonize because the Spirit of God worketh in us so to will and to do. We plead with God because we are prompted and guided by his Holy Spirit. Our pleadings, which go up to heaven for the advent of Jesus, are the Holy Ghost crying in the hearts of the blood-bought. The church herself prays in the Holy Ghost, instantly crying day and night for the fulfilment of the greatest of all the covenant promises.

*“Come, Lord, and tarry not;
Bring the long-look’d-for day;*

*Oh, why these years of waiting here,
 These ages of delay?
 "Come, for thy saints still wait;
 Daily ascends their sigh;
 The Spirit and the bride say, Come;
 Dost thou not hear the cry?"*

The next clause of the text indicates that each separate believer should breathe the same desire, "Let him that heareth say, Come." Brethren, this will be the index of your belonging to the bride, the token of your sharing in the one Spirit, and being joined unto the one body, if you unite with the Spirit and the bride in saying, "Come." For no ungodly man truly desireth Christ's coming; but on the contrary he desireth to get away from him, and forget his very existence. To delight in drawing near unto the Lord Jesus Christ is an evidence of our election and calling; to wish more and more fully to know him and to dwell more near to him is the token of our having been reconciled unto God by his death, and of our having a new nature implanted in us: to long to see him manifested in fulness of glory is the ensign of a true soldier of the cross. Do you feel this? Do you desire to be better acquainted with the Lord Jesus? You have heard the gospel, do you say as the church doth, "Come, Lord Jesus"? Alas, to many the day of the Lord will be darkness and not light, and they cannot desire it, for it will be a day of terror and confusion unto them; but unto such as have heard and believed in the precious name of the Son of God it will be joy and peace, and therefore the cry of their heart is, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

This utterance of "Come" by him that heareth it is the mark of his joyful consent to the fact that Christ shall come. It is well, my friend, if when thou hearest that Christ will come thou sayest, "Let him come." If he come to reign, let him, for

blessed be his name, who should reign but he? If he descend to judge the earth, let him come, for we shall be justified at his bar. His ends and objects in coming cannot but be fraught with infinite benefit to us and glory to our God, and therefore we would not delay his chariot wheels by so much as an hour.

*“Hasten, Lord! the promised hour;
Come in glory and in power;
Still thy foes are unsubdued;
Nature sighs to be renew’d.
Time has nearly reached its sum,
All things with thy bride say ‘Come;’
Jesus, whom all worlds adore,
Come and reign for evermore!”*

The saying of “come” by each true hearer is the sign that his heart responds to the doctrine which he has been taught. We have received it by revelation that Christ is to come, and our soul saith, “Even so. Come Lord Jesus; it is our happiness that it should be so.”

Thus have we mentioned the persons by whom this cry is uttered, and now let us add a word upon the tense in which the cry 'is put. It is in the present tense. “The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come.” The Spirit and the bride are anxious that Christ should come at once, and he that knoweth Christ and loveth him desireth also that he should not tarry. Look, my brethren, is it not time as far as our poor judgments go that Jesus should come? See how iniquity abounds! Behold our very streets, how foul they are with sin! See how errors are multiplied: do they not swarm even in the church of God itself? Have not heresies come down like birds of prey upon the sacrifice, to pollute even the altars of the Most High? See at this present time how sceptics defy the living

God, how they hiss out from between their teeth the question, "Where is the promise of his coming, for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were?" Behold how Antichrist also stalks boldly through the land. Superstitions which your fathers could not bear are set up among you yet again, and the graven images, crosses, crucifixes and sacraments, gods many and lords many, of old Rome have come back to England again, and they are worshipped in her national church. In England, stained with the blood of martyrs, once again the mark of the beast is to be seen on the foreheads of those whom she feeds to teach her people! Is it not time that the Lord should come? O hoary systems of superstition, what else can shake you from your thrones! O gods that have long ruled over superstitious minds, who else can hurl you to the moles and to the bats? You know him who made you quiver on your thrones on that night when he was born in Bethlehem's manger, and you may well tremble, for when he cometh it will be with an iron rod to dash you into shivers. "Even so," we cry, "come, Lord Jesus: come quickly. Amen."

II. Now, secondly, let us listen to THE EARTHWARD CRY OF INVITATION TO MEN. I must confess I cannot quite tell you how it is that the sense in my text glides away from the coming of Christ to the earth into the coming of sinners to Christ, but it does. Like colours which blend, or strains of music which melt into each other, so the first sense slides into the second. This almost insensible transition seems to me to have been occasioned by the memory of the fact that the coming of Christ is not desirable to all mankind. There are the unbelievers who have not obeyed him, and when they hear the Spirit and the bride say come, straightway they begin to tremble, and they say within themselves, "What if he should come! Alas, we rejected him, and his coming will be our destruction." I think I hear some such sinners weeping and

wailing at the very thought of the Lord's coming, for they know that they also who have pierced him must behold him and weep because of him. It seems almost cruel on the part of the bride and the Spirit to be saying come, when that coming must be for the overthrow of all the adversaries of the Lord: and so Jesus himself seems gently to turn aside the prayer of his people while he pleads with the needy ones. He lets the prayer flow towards himself, but yet directs its flow towards poor sinners also. He himself seems to say, "Ye bid me come, but I, as, the Saviour of men, look at your brothers and your sisters who are yet in the far country, the other sheep which are not yet of the fold, whom also I must bring in, and in answer to your cry to me to come I speak to those wandering ones, and say, 'Let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.'" Is not that the way in which the sense glides from its first direction?

Now, from whom does this cry arise?

It first comes from Jesus. It is he who says, "Let him that is athirst come." The passage so stands, as I have already said, that we cannot but believe this verse to have been the utterance of Him who is the root and offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. He out of heaven cries to the unconverted, "Let him that is athirst come." Will they refuse him that speaketh? Shall Jesus himself invite them, and will they turn a deaf ear?

But next, it is the call of the Spirit of God. The Spirit says, "Come." This Book which he has written, on every page says to men, "Come! Come to Jesus." This is the cry of the Spirit in the preaching of the word. What mean sermons and discourses but "Come sinner, come?" And those secret motions of power upon the conscience, those times when the heart grows calm even amid dissipation, and thought is forced upon the mind, those are the movements of the Spirit of God by which he is showing man his danger and revealing to him his refuge, and so is saying,

“Come.” All over the world wherever there is a Bible and a preacher the Spirit is saying “Come.”

And this is the speech of the church too in conjunction with the Spirit, for the Spirit speaks with the bride and the bride speaks by the Spirit. The church is always saying “Come.” This is indeed the meaning of her Sabbath gatherings, of her testimony in the pulpit, of her teaching in the schools, of her prayers and her exhortations. Everywhere, poor wandering hearts, the church of God is saying to you, “Come”; or if she does not do so she is not acting in her true character as the bride of Christ. For this purpose is there a church in the world at all; if it were not for this our Lord might take his people home as soon as they have believed, but they are kept here to be a seed to keep the truth alive in the world, and their daily earnest cry to you is “Come, come to Jesus.” “The Spirit and the bride say, Come.”

The next giver of the invitation is spoken of as “him that heareth.” If you have had an ear to hear, and have heard the gospel to your own salvation, the very next thing you have to do is to say to those around you, “Come.” Go and speak to anybody that you meet, to everybody that you meet, according as opportunity and occasion shall be given you, and say what all the church saith and what the Spirit is saying— namely, “Come.” Give your Master’s invitation, distribute the testimony of his loving will, and bid poor sinners come to Jesus. Your children and your servants, — bid them come; your neighbours and your friends, —bid them come; the strangers and the far-off ones, — bid them come; the harlot and the thief, — bid such come; those that are in the highways and the hedges, those who are far-off from God by abominable works— say also unto all these “Come.” Because you have heard the message and proved its truth, go you and call in others to the feast of love. Oh, if there were more of these individual proclaimed what blessings

would descend upon London! I do not know how many believers in Christ there are present in this house, but I do know that there are five thousand of us associated in church fellowship at this Tabernacle; and if the whole of these five thousand would but begin to bear witness for Christ with all their might, there would be salt enough even within this one house to season all London, with God's blessing upon our efforts. My brothers and sisters, let us not be slow to address ourselves to those to whom the Spirit of God within us, and the voice of Jesus from above, and the cry of the whole church is addressed. Let each individual member take up the note of invitation till all around the trembling sinner hears the encouraging cry of "Come."

Now, notice the remarkably encouraging character of this "Come" which is given by the Spirit and the bride. One part of it is directed to the thirsty: "Let him that is athirst come." By thirst is meant necessity, and an appetite for its supply. Dost thou feel thyself guilty, and dost thou desire pardon? — thou art a thirsty one. Art thou disquieted and filled with unrest, and dost thou long to be pacified in heart? — thou art a thirsty one. Is there a something, thou knowest not perhaps what it is, for which thou art sighing, and crying, and pining? — thou art a thirsty one, and to thee is the invitation most positively and distinctly given, "Let him that is athirst come."

But how much I rejoice that the second half of the invitation does not contain even an apparent limit, as this first sentence has been thought to do! I regard the thirst here mentioned as by no means requiring of any man that he should have gone through a process of horror on account of guilt, or should have been overwhelmed with conviction, and driven to despair of salvation. I believe that any desire and any longing will come under the description, of "thirst"; but since some have stumbled at it, and have said again and again, "I feel I do

not thirst enough," see how sweetly the second clause of our text puts it— "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Whether thou be thirsty or not, yet hast thou a will to drink? hast thou a will to be saved? a will to be cleansed from sin? a will to be made a new creature in Christ Jesus? Dost thou will to have eternal life? Then thus saith the Spirit to thee, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Now, notice three vast doors through which the hugest and most elephantine sinner that ever made the earth shake beneath the weight of his guilt may go. Here are the three doors. "Whosoever"— "will" — "freely" "Whosoever," there is the first door. "Whosoever" — then what man dare have the impudence to say that he is shut out? If you say that you cannot come in under "whosoever" I ask you how you dare narrow a word which is in itself so broad, so infinite. "Whosoever" — that must mean every man that ever lived, or ever shall live, while yet he is here and wills to come. Well, then, the word "will." There is nothing about past character, nor present character; nothing about knowledge, or feeling, nor anything else but the will: "Whosoever will." Speak of the gate standing ajar! This looks to me like taking the door right off the hinges and carrying it away. "Whosoever will." There is no hindrance whatever in your way. And then "freely." God's gifts are given without any expectation or recompense, or any requirements and conditions — "Let him take the water of life freely." Thou hast not to bring thy good feelings, or good desires, or good works, but come and take freely what God gives you for nothing. You are not even to bring repentance and faith in order to obtain grace, but you are to come and accept repentance and faith as the gifts of God, and the work of the Holy Spirit. What broad gates of mercy these are! How wide the entrance which love has prepared for coming souls! "Whosoever!" "Will!" "Freely!"

Observe how the invitation sums up the work the sinner is

called upon to do. First, he is bidden to come. "Whosoever will, let him come." Now, to come to Christ means simply for the soul to draw near to him by trusting him. You are not asked to bring a load with you, nor to work for Christ in order to salvation, but just to come to him. Nothing is said about the style of coming, come running or creeping, come boldly or timidly, for if you do but come to Jesus, he will in no wise cast you out. A simple reliance upon the Lord Jesus is the one essential for eternal life.

Then the next direction is "take." "Whosoever will, let him take." That is all. That word "take" is a grand word to express the gospel. The world's gospel is "bring": Christ's gospel is "take." Nature's gospel is "make": just change the letter and you have the gospel of grace which is "take." There is the water, dear friends, you have not to dig a well to find it, you have only to take it. There is the bread of heaven, you have not to grind the flour or bake the loaf, you have only to take it. There is a garment woven from the top throughout, and without seam; you have not to add a fringe to it, you have only to take it. The way of salvation may be summed up in the four letters of the word "take." Do you desire Christ? take him. Do you want pardon? take it. Do you need a new heart? take it. Do you want peace on earth? take it. Do you want heaven hereafter? take it—that is all. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

And there is one other word which I love to dwell on, and it comes twice over "let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will let him take." It is graciously said, let him. It seems to me as if the Lord Jesus Christ saw a poor soul standing thirsty at the flowing crystal fountain of his love, and the devil standing there whispered to him, "You see the sacred stream, but it flows for others. It is what you need, but you must not have it, it is not for you." Listen, there is a voice from beyond the clouds which

cries aloud, "Let him take it!" Stand back devil, let the willing one come! He is putting down his lip to drink—he understands it now—but there comes rushing upon him a host of his old sins like so many winged harpies, and they scream out to him, "Go back, you must not draw nigh, this fountain is not for you: this pure crystal stream must not be defiled by such leprous lips as yours." Again there comes from the throne of love this blessed password, "Let him come and let him take." It is as when a man is in court and is called for, to go into the witness-box. He is standing in the crowd, and his name is called: what happens? As soon as he hears his name he begins to push through the throng to reach his place. "What are you at?" says one. "I am called," says he. "Stand back; why do you push so?" says another. "I am called by the judge," says he. A big policeman demands, "Why are you making such confusion in court?" "But," says the man, "I am called. My name was called out, and I must come." If he cannot come, if it is not possible for him to get through the throng, one of the authorities calls out, "Make way for that man—he is summoned by the court. Officers, clear a passage and let him come." Now the Lord Jesus calls the thirsty-one and he says, "Whosoever will, let him come!" Make way doubts, make way sins, make way fears, make way devils, make way all of you for Jesus Christ the great king and judge of all has said, "Let him come!" Who shall hinder when Jesus permits? He who is divinely called shall surely come to Jesus. Come he shall, whoever may stand in his way. This morning I feel as if I could come to Jesus over again, and I will do so. Do you not feel the same, my beloved brethren? Well then, dear brother or sister, after you have so done turn round and proclaim this precious gospel invitation to all around you, and say to them "Come and take the water of life freely."

III.— The third point is THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THESE TWO COMINGS. Is there any relation

between the coming of Christ from heaven to earth, and the coming of poor sinful creatures to Christ and trusting him?

There is this relation, first, they are both suggested in this passage, by the closing of the scriptural canon. John is about to write by the voice of the Lord that none are to add to or take from the completed Book of God. The church says, "If there are no more prophets to proclaim the mind of God, no more apostles to write with infallible authority, and no more instructors to give forth new revelations, or bring new promises, then it only remaineth that the Lord should come. "Then," says she, "Come, Lord Jesus." And here are the sinners standing round, and they hear that no other gospel is to be expected, no more revelations are to be added to those which are in this book, there will be no other atonement, no other way of salvation, therefore it is their wisdom to come at once to Jesus. It is because the Book was about to receive its finis that the Spirit and the bride unitedly cried to the sinners to come at once. No fresh gospel is to be expected, therefore let them come at once. Why should they tarry any longer? The oxen and fatlings are killed, come to the supper! All things are ready, there is nothing more to be done, or to be revealed; upon us the ends of the earth have come. "It is finished" hath rung through earth and heaven, therefore—

"Come and welcome, sinner come!"

I think I perceive another connection, namely, that those people who in very truth love Christ enough to cry to him continually to come are sure to love sinners also, and to say to them also, "Come." Not but what there are some who talk a great deal about Christ's coming, and yet manifest but small care for other men's souls. Well, it is talk; the profession of looking for the second advent is nothing but talk when it does not lead people to cry to perishing men, "Come to Christ." He who loves Christ as he should loves sinners also; and that man

who loves Christ so very much that he is quite wrapped up in himself, and forgets the dying millions around him, and stands star-gazing into heaven, expecting to see a sudden glory, to take himself away, does not understand what he saith: for if he loved his Lord he would set to work for him, and would show that he expected the King to come by endeavouring to extend his kingdom.

There is this connection also, that before Christ comes a certain number of his elect must be ingathered. He shall not come until an appointed company shall have been brought to eternal life by the preaching of the Word. Oh then, brethren, it is ours to labour that the wanderers may come home, for so we are, as far as lieth in us, hastening the time when our Beloved himself shall come.

Once more, there is a sort of coming of Christ which, though it be not the first meaning here, may be included in it, for it touches the centre of the sinner's coming to Christ. Because, brethren, when we cry, "Come, Lord Jesus," if he shall answer us by giving us of his Spirit more fully, so that he comes to us spiritually, then penitent souls will assuredly be brought to his feet. We know this, that wherever the Lord himself is in a meeting, hearts are sure to be broken and repentance is certain to be manifested. Wherever Jesus Christ is in power there must be a revival, for dead souls must come to life in him. The great thing we want above all others is a grip of that glorious promise, "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world," and as we in this sense obtain the coming of the Lord, we shall see sinners come and take of the water of life.

IV. Well then, lastly, WHAT ARE THE RESPONSES? We sent up a cry to heaven, and said, "Come." The response is, "Behold, I come quickly." That is eminently satisfactory. You may have to wait awhile, but the cry is heard, and if the Lord should not come in your lifetime, the same preparation of heart

which made you look for his coming will be blessedly useful to you if he sends his messenger to take you home by death. The same waiting and watching will answer in either case, so you need not be under any distress about which of the two shall happen. Christ will descend to earth as surely as he ascended to heaven, and when he cometh there will be victory to the right and to the true, and his saints shall reign with him.

And now concerning this other cry of "Come." We ask sinners to come. We have asked them in a fourfold voice: Jesus, the Spirit, the bride, and him that heareth, they have all said, "Come." Will they come? Brethren and sisters, it is a question which I cannot answer. You must not ask me, for I do not know; but you had better ask the persons themselves: they are of age, ask them. Take care that you do ask them before they get out of the Tabernacle this morning. They know, and therefore they can tell you whether they mean to come or not. This I will say to them, —my dear friends, I do not trust that this last day of the year may be to you a day of mercy. The Jews had a feast of ingatherings at the end of the year, and I earnestly pray that we may have an ingathering of precious souls to Christ ere the year quite runs out: that would be a grand finish to this year of grace, and a sweet encouragement for the future.

But suppose you do not come. Well, you have been invited. If a Christmas feast is provided for the poor, and a number of beggars are standing shivering outside in the sleet and snow, and will not come in though earnestly bidden, we say "Well, you have been invited: what more do you want?" Remember, also, that you have been invited very earnestly. The Spirit, the bride, and him that heareth, and Jesus himself, — they have all said to yon "Come." I am as the man that heareth, and I have said, "Come." I do not know how to say it more earnestly than I have said it. Oh, how would my soul delight if every one here did come to Christ at this moment! I would ask no greater joy

out of heaven to crown this year with. You are invited, and you are earnestly invited, what more do you want? If you never come, you will have this thought to haunt you for ever— “I was invited and pressed again and again, but I would not come.”

I want you to remember, too, that you are called to come now, at once. You may not be bidden to come to-morrow for several reasons: you may not be alive, or there may be no earnest person near you to invite you. Can there be a better day than to-day? You have always said “To-morrow,” yet where are you now? Not a bit forwarder some of you than you were ten years ago. Do you recollect that sermon when you were made to tremble so, and you said, “Please God, I get out of this, I will seek his face,” but you postponed it, and are you any forwarder now? You remember the story of the countryman who would not cross the river just yet, but sat down and said he would wait until all the water had gone by. He waited long in vain, and he might have waited for ever, for rivers are always flowing. You too are waiting till a more convenient season shall come, and all the difficulties shall have gone by. Be quit of such supreme folly. There always will be difficulty, the river will always flow. O man, be wise, plunge into it and swim across. Now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation. Oh that you would believe in Jesus Christ! May his Spirit lead you to do so now.

“Only trust him! only trust him!

Only trust him now!

He will save you! he will save you!

He will save you now!”

Cast yourselves upon the blood and merits of the Lord Jesus, and the great work is done. The Lord help you to do so.

Amen.

SEVENTY-THREE
GOD'S WILL AND MAN'S WILL

SERMON GIVEN ON MARCH 30, 1862

SCRIPTURE: ROMANS 9:16; REVELATION

22:17

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 8

*"So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him
that runneth, but of God that sheweth
mercy."*

ROMANS 9:16

*"Whosoever will, let him take the water of life
freely."—*

REVELATION 22:17

THE great controversy which for many ages has divided the Christian Church has hinged upon the difficult question of

“the will.” I need not say of that conflict that it has done much mischief to the Christian Church, undoubtedly it has; but I will rather say, that it has been fraught with incalculable usefulness; for it has thrust forward before the minds of Christians, precious truths, which, but for it, might have been kept in the shade. I believe that the two great doctrines of human responsibility and divine sovereignty have both been brought out the more prominently in the Christian Church by the fact that there is a class of strong-minded hard-headed men who magnify sovereignty at the expense of responsibility; and another earnest and useful class who uphold and maintain human responsibility oftentimes at the expense of divine sovereignty. I believe there is a needs-be for this in the finite character of the human mind, while the natural lethargy of the Church requires a kind of healthy irritation to arouse her powers and stimulate her exertions. The pebbles in the living stream of truth are worn smooth and round by friction. Who among us would wish to suspend a law of nature whose effects on the whole are good? I glory in that which at the present day is so much spoken against — sectarianism, for “sectarianism” is the cant phrase which our enemies use for all firm religious belief. I find it applied to all sorts of Christians; no matter what views he may hold, if a man be but in earnest, he is a sectarian at once. Success to sectarianism; let it live and flourish. When that is done with, farewell to the power of godliness. When we cease, each of us, to maintain our own views of truth, and to maintain those views firmly and strenuously, then truth shall fly out of the land, and error alone shall reign: this, indeed, is the object of our foes: under the cover of attacking sects, they attack true religion, and would drive it, if they could, from off the face of the earth. In the controversy which has raged, — a controversy which, I again say, I believe to have been really healthy, and which has done us all a vast amount of good—

mistakes have arisen from two reasons. Some brethren have altogether forgotten one order of truths, and then, in the next place, they have gone too far with others. We all have one blind eye, and too often we are like Nelson in the battle, we put the telescope to that blind eye, and then protest that we cannot see. I have heard of one man who said he had read the Bible through thirty-four times on his knees, but could not see a word about election in it; I think it very likely that he could not; kneeling is a very uncomfortable posture for reading, and possibly the superstition which would make the poor man perform this penance would disqualify him for using his reason; moreover, to get through the Book thirty-four times, he probably read in such a hurry that he did not know what he was reading, and might as well have been dreaming over "Robinson Crusoe" as the Bible. He put the telescope to the blind eye. Many of us do that; we do not want to see a truth, and therefore we say we cannot see it. On the other hand, there are others who push a truth too far. "This is good; oh! this is precious!" say they, and then they think it is good for everything; that in fact it is the only truth in the world. You know how often things are injured by over-praise; how a good medicine, which really was a great boon for a certain disease, comes to be despised utterly by the physician, because a certain quack has praised it up as being a universal cure; so puffery in doctrine leads to its dishonour. Truth has thus suffered on all sides; on the one hand brethren would not see all the truth, and on the other hand they magnified out of proportion that which they did see. You have seen those mirrors, those globes that are sometimes hung up in gardens; you walk up to them and you see your head ten times as large as your body, or you walk away and put yourself in another position, and then your feet are monstrous and the rest of your body is small; this is an ingenious toy, but I am sorry to say that many go to work with God's truth upon the model of

this toy; they magnify one capital truth, till it becomes monstrous; they minify and speak little of another truth till it becomes altogether forgotten. In what I shall be able to say this morning you will probably detect the failing to which I allude the common fault of humanity, and suspect that I also am magnifying one truth at the expense of another; but I will say this, before I proceed further, that it shall not be the case if I can help it, but I will endeavour honestly to bring out the truth as I have learned it, and if in ought ye see that I teach you what is contrary to the Word of God, reject it; but mark you, if it be according to God's Word, reject it at your peril ; for when I have once delivered it to you, if ye receive it not the responsibility lies with you.

There are two things, then, this morning I shall have to talk about. The first is, that the work of salvation rests upon the will of God, and not upon the will of man; and secondly, the equally sure doctrine, that the unit of man has its proper position in the work of salvation, and is not to be ignored.

I. First, then, SALVATION HINGES UPON THE WILL OF GOD, AND NOT UPON THE WILL OF MAN. So saith our text — "It is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy;" by which is clearly meant that the reason why any man is saved is not because he wills it, but because God willed, according to that other passage, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." The whole scheme of salvation, we aver, from the first to the last, hinges and turns, and is dependant upon the absolute will of God, and not upon the will of the creature.

This, we think, we can show in two or three ways; and first, we think that analogy furnishes us with a rather strong argument. There is a certain likeness between all God's works; if a painter shall paint three pictures, there is a certain identity of style about all the three which leads you to know that they are

from the same hand. Or, if an author shall write three works upon three different subjects, yet there are qualities running through the whole, which will lead you to assert, "That is the same man's writing, I am certain, in the whole of the three books." Now what we find in the works of nature, we generally find to be correct with regard to the work of providence; and what is true of nature and of providence, is usually true with regard to the greater work of grace. Turn your thoughts, then, to the works of creation. There was a time when these works had no existence; the sun was not born; the young moon had not begun to fill her horns; the stars were not; not even the illimitable void of space was then in existence. God dwelt alone without a creature. I ask you, with whom did he then take counsel? Who instructed him? Who had a voice in that council by which the wisdom of God was directed? Did it not rest with his own will whether he would make or not? Was not creation itself, when it lay in embryo in his thoughts entirely, in his keeping so that he would or would not just as he pleased? And when he willed to create, did he not still exercise his own discretion and will as to what and how he would make? If he hath made the stars spheres, what reason was there for this but his own will? If he hath chosen that they should move in the circle rather than in any other orbit, is it not God's own fiat that hath made them do so? And when this round world, this green earth on which we dwell, leaped from his moulding hand into its sunlit track, was not this also according to the divine will? Who ordained, save the Lord, that there the Himalayas should lift their heads and pierce the clouds, and that there the deep cavernous recesses of the sea should pierce earth's bowels of rock? Who, save himself, ordained that yon Sahara should be brown and sterile, and that yonder isle should laugh in the midst of the sea with joy over her own verdure? Who, I say, ordained this, save God? You see running through creation,

from the tiniest animalculae up to the tall archangel who stands before the throne, this working of God's own will. Milton was nobly right when he represents the Eternal One as saying,

*"My goodness is most free
To act or not: Necessity and Chance
Approach not me, and what I will is fate."*

He created as it pleased him; he made them as he chose; the potter exercised power over his clay to make his vessels as he willed, and to make them for what purposes he pleased. Think you that he has abdicated the throne of grace? Does he reign in creation and not in grace? Is he absolute king over nature and not over the greater works of the new nature? Is he Lord over the things which his hand made at first, and not King over the great regeneration, the new-making wherein he maketh all things new?

But take the works of Providence. I suppose there will be no dispute amongst us that in providential matters God ordereth all things according to the counsel of his own will. If we should, however, be troubled with any doubts about that matter, we might hear the striking words of Nebuchadnezzar when, taught by God, he had repented of his pride— "All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; he doth according to his will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou." From the first moment of human history even to the last, God's will shall be done. What though it be a catastrophe or a crime— there may be the second causes and the action of human evil, but the great first cause is in all. If we could imagine that one human action had eluded the prescience or the predestination of God, we could suppose that the whole might have done so, and all things might drift to sea,

anchorless, rudderless, a sport to every wave, the victim of tempest and hurricane. One leak in the ship of Providence would sink her, one hour in which Omnipotence relaxed its grasp and she would fall to atoms. But it is the comfortable conviction of all God's people that "all things work together for good to them that love God;" and that God ruleth and overruleth, and reigneth in all acts of men and in all events that transpire; from seeming evil still producing good, and better still, and better still in infinite progression, still ordering all things according to the counsel of his will. And think you that he reigns in Providence and is King there, and not in grace? Has he given up the blood-bought land to be ruled by man, while common Providence is left as a lonely province to be his only heritage? He hath not let slip the reins of the great chariot of Providence, and think you that when Christ goeth forth in the chariot of his grace it is with steeds unguided, or driven only by chance, or by the fickle will of man? Oh, no, brethren. As surely as God's will is the axle of the universe, as certainly as God's will is the great heart of Providence sending its pulsings through even the most distant limbs of human act, so in grace let us rest assured that he is King, willing to do as he pleases, having mercy on whom he will have mercy, calling whom he chooses to call, quickening whom he wills, and fulfilling, despite man's hardness of heart, despite man's wilful rejection of Christ, his own purposes, his own decrees, without one of them falling to the ground. We think, then, that analogy helps to strengthen us in the declaration of the text, that salvation is not left with man's will.

2. But, secondly, we believe that the difficulties which surround the opposite theory are tremendous. In fact, we cannot bear to look them in the face. If there be difficulties about ours, there are ten times more about the opposite. We think that the difficulties which surround our belief that salva-

tion depends upon the will of God, arise from our ignorance in not understanding enough of God to be able to judge of them; but that the difficulties in the other case do not arise from that cause, but from certain great truths, clearly revealed, which stand in manifest opposition to the figment which our opponents have espoused. According to their theory— that salvation depends upon our own will— you have first of all this difficulty to meet, that you have made the purpose of God in the great plan of salvation entirely contingent. You have an “if” put upon everything. Christ may die, but it is not certain according to that theory that he will redeem a great multitude; nay, not certain that he will redeem any, since the efficacy of the redemption, according to that plan, rests not in its own intrinsic power, but in the will of man accepting that redemption. Hence if man be, as we aver he always is, if he be a bond-slave as to his will, and will not yield to the invitation of God’s grace, then in such a case the atonement of Christ would be valueless, useless, and altogether in vain, for not a soul would be saved by it; and even when souls are saved by it, according to that theory, the efficacy, I say, lies not in the blood itself, but in the will of man which gives it efficacy. Redemption is therefore made contingent; the cross shakes, the blood falls powerless on the ground, and atonement is a matter of perhaps. There is a heaven provided, but there may be no souls who will ever come there if their coming is to be of themselves. There is a fountain filled with blood, but there may be none who will ever wash in it unless divine purpose and power shall constrain them to come. You may look at any one promise of grace, but you cannot say over it, “This is the sure mercy of David;” for there is an “if,” and a “but;” a “perhaps,” and a “peradventure.” In fact, the reins are gone out of God’s hands; the linch-pin is taken away from the wheels of the creation; you have left the whole economy of grace and mercy to be the gathering together

of fortuitous atoms impelled by man's own will, and what may become of it at the end nobody can know. We cannot tell on that theory whether God will be glorified or sin will triumph. Oh! how happy are we when we come back to the old-fashioned doctrines, and cast our anchor where it can get its grip in the eternal purpose and counsel of God, who worketh all things to the good pleasure of his will.

Then another difficulty comes in ; not only is everything made contingent, but it does seem to us as if man were thus made to be the supreme being in the universe. According to the freewill scheme the Lord intends good, but he must wait like a lackey on his own creature to know what his intention is ; God willeth good and would do it, but he cannot, because he has an unwilling man who will not

have God's good thing carried into effect. What do ye, sirs, but drag the Eternal from his throne, and lift up into it that fallen creature, man; for man, according to that theory, nods, and his nod is destiny. You must have a destiny somewhere; it must either be as God wills or as man wills. If it be as God wills, then Jehovah sits as sovereign upon his throne of glory, and all hosts obey him, and the world is safe; if not God, then you put man there, to say, "I will," or "I will not; if I will it I will enter heaven; if I will it I will despise the grace of God; if I will it I will conquer the Holy Spirit, for I am stronger than God, and stronger than omnipotence; if I will it I will make the blood of Christ of no effect, for I am mightier than that blood, mightier than the blood of the Son of God himself; though God make his purpose, yet will I laugh at his purpose; it shall be my purpose that shall make his purpose stand, or make it fall." Why, sirs, if this be not Atheism, it is idolatry; it is putting man where God should be, and I shrink with solemn awe and horror from that doctrine which makes the grandest of God's works—the salvation of man—to be dependant upon the will of his

creature whether it shall be accomplished or not. Glory I can and must in my text in its fullest sense. "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."

3. We think that the known condition of man is a very strong argument against the supposition that salvation depends upon his own wills and hence is a great confirmation of the truth that it depends upon the will of God; that it is God that chooses, and not man, — God who takes the first step, and not the creature. Sirs, on the theory that man comes to Christ of his own will, what do you with texts of Scripture which say that he is dead? "And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins;" you will say that is a figure. I grant it, but what is the meaning of it? You say the meaning is, he is spiritually dead. Well, then I ask you, how can he perform the spiritual act of willing that which is right? He is alive enough to will that which is evil, only evil and that continually, but he is not alive to will that which is spiritually good. Do you not know, to turn to another Scripture, that he cannot even discern that which is spiritual? for the natural man knoweth not the things which be of God, seeing they are spiritual and must be spiritually discerned. Why, he has not a "spirit" with which to discern them; he has only a soul and body, but the third principle, implanted in regeneration, which is called in the Word of God, "the spirit," he knows nothing of, and he is therefore incapable, seeing he is dead and is without the vitalizing spirit, of doing what you say he does. Then, again, what make you of the words of our Saviour where he said to those who had heard even him, "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life?" Where is free-will after such a text as that? When Christ affirms that they will not, who dare say they will? "Ah, but," you say, "they could if they would." Dear sir, I am not talking about that; I am not talking about if they would, the question is "will they?" and we

say “no,” they never will by nature. Man is so depraved, so set on mischief, and the way of salvation is so obnoxious to his pride, so hateful to his lusts, that he cannot like it, and will not like it, unless he who ordained the plan shall change his nature, and subdue his will. Mark, this stubborn will of man is his sin; he is not to be excused for it; he is guilty because he will not come; he is condemned because he will not come; because he will not believe in Christ, therefore is condemnation resting upon him, but still the fact does not alter for all that, that he will not come by nature if left to himself. Well, then, if man will not, how shall he be saved unless God shall make him will? — unless, in some mysterious way, he who made the heart shall touch its mainspring so that it shall move in a direction opposite to that which it naturally follows.

4. But there is another argument which will come closer home to us. It is consistent with the universal experience of all God’s people that salvation is of God’s will. You will say, “I have not had a very long life, I have not, but I have had a very extensive acquaintance with all sections of the Christian Church, and I solemnly protest before you, that I have never yet met with a man professing to be a Christian, let alone his really being so, who ever said that his coming to God was the result of his unassisted nature. Universally, I believe, without exception, the people of God will say it was the Holy Spirit that made them what they are; that they should have refused to come as others do unless God’s grace had sweetly influenced their wills. There are some hymns in Mr. Wesley’s hymn-book which are stronger upon this point than I could ever venture to be, for he puts prayers into the lips of the sinner in which God is even asked to force him to be saved by grace. Of course I can take no objection to a term so strong, but it goes to prove this, that among all sections of Christians, whether Arminian or Calvinistic, whatever their doctrinal sentiments may be, their

experimental sentiments are the same. I do not think they would any of them refuse to join in the verse—

*“Oh! yes, I do love Jesus,
Because he first loved me.”
Nor would they find fault with our own hymn,
“‘Twas the same love that spread the feast;
That sweetly forced us in ;
Else we had still refused to taste,
And perished in our sin.”*

We bring out the crown and say, “On whose head shall we put it? Who ruled at the turning-point? Who decided this case?” and the universal Church of God, throwing away their creeds, would say, “Crown him; crown him, put it on his head, for he is worthy; he has made us to differ; he has done it, and unto him be the praise for ever and ever.” What staggers me is, that men can believe dogmas contrary to their own experience, — that they can hug that to their hearts as precious to which their own inward convictions must give the lie.

5. But, lastly, in the way of argument, and to bring out our great battering-ram at the last. It is not, after all, arguments from analogy, nor reasons from the difficulties of the opposite position, nor inferences from the known feebleness of human nature, nor even deductions from experience, that will settle this question once for all. To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. Do me the pleasure, then, to use your Bibles for a moment or two, and let us see what Scripture saith on this main point. First, with regard to the matter of God’s preparation, and his plan with regard to salvation. We turn to the apostle’s words in the epistle to the Ephesians, and we find in the first chapter and the third verse, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord

Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself according to the good pleasure of his will”—a double word you notice—it is according to the will of his will. No expression could be stronger in the original to show the entire absoluteness of this thing as depending on the will of God. It seems, then, that the choice of his people and their adoption is according to his will. So far we are satisfied, indeed, with the testimony of the apostle. Then in the ninth verse, “Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; even in him.” So, then, it seems that the grand result of the gathering together of all the saved in Christ, as well as the primitive purpose, is according to the counsel of his will. What stronger proof can there be that salvation depends upon the will of God? Moreover, it says in the eleventh verse—“In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will a stronger expression than “of his will”—“of his own will,” his free unbiassed will, his will alone. As for redemption as well as for the eternal purpose—redemption is according to the will of God. You remember that verse in Hebrews, tenth chapter, ninth verse: “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he might establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified.” So that the redemption offered up on Calvary, like the election made before the foundation of the world, is the result of the divine will. There will be little controversy here: the main point is

about our new birth, and here we cannot allow of any diversity of opinion. Turn to the Gospel according to John, the first chapter, and thirteenth verse. It is utterly impossible that human language could have put a stronger negative on the vainglorious claims of the human will than this passage does: "Born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." A passage equally clear is to be found in the Epistle of James, at the first chapter, and the eighteenth verse: "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures." In these passages— and they are not the only ones— the new birth is peremptorily and in the strongest language put down as being the fruit and effect of the will and purpose of God. As to the sanctification which is the result and outgrowth of the new birth, that also is according to God's holy will. In the first of Thessalonians, fourteenth chapter, and third verse, we have, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." One more passage I shall need you to refer to, the sixth chapter, and thirty-ninth verse. Here we find that the preservation, the perseverance, the resurrection, and the eternal glory of God's people, rests upon his will. "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day; and this is the will of him that sent me that every one which seeth the Son and believeth on him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day." And indeed this is why the saints go to heaven at all, because in the seventeenth chapter of John, Christ is recorded as praying, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." We close, then, by noticing that according to Scripture there is not a single blessing in the new covenant which is not conferred upon us according to the will of God, and that as the vessel hangs upon the nail, so every blessing we receive hangs upon the absolute will and counsel of God, who gives these

mercies even as he gives the gifts of the Spirit according as he wills. We shall now leave that point, and take the second great truth, and speak a little while upon it.

II. MAN'S WILL HAS ITS PROPER PLACE IN THE MATTER OF SALVATION. "Whosoever will let him come and take the water of life freely." According to this and many other texts of Scripture where man is addressed as a being having a will, it appears clear enough that men are not saved by compulsion. When a man receives the grace of Christ, he does not receive it against his will. No man shall be pardoned while he abhors the thought of forgiveness. No man shall have joy in the Lord if he says, "I do not wish to rejoice in the Lord." Do not think that anybody shall have the angels pushing them behind into the gates of heaven. They must go there freely or else they will never go there at all. We are not saved against our will; nor again, mark you, is the will taken away; for God does not come and convert the intelligent free agent into a machine. When he turns the slave into a child, it is not by plucking out of him the will which he possesses. We are as free under grace as ever we were under sin; nay, we were slaves when we were under sin, and when the Son makes us free we are free indeed, and we are never free before. Erskine, in speaking of his own conversion, says he ran to Christ "with full consent against his will," by which he meant it was against his own will; against his will as it was till Christ came, but when Christ came, then he came to Christ with full consent, and was as willing to be saved — no, that is a cold word— as delighted, as pleased, as transported to receive Christ as if grace had not constrained him. But we do hold and teach that though the will of man is not ignored, and men are not saved against their wills, that the work of the Spirit, which is the effect of the will of God, is to change the human will, and so make men willing in the day of God's power, working in them to will and to do of his own good plea-

sure. The work of the Spirit is consistent with the original laws and constitution of human nature. Ignorant men talk grossly and carnally about the work of the Spirit in the heart as if the heart were a lump of flesh, and the Holy Spirit turned it round mechanically. Now, brethren, how is your heart and my heart changed in any matter? Why, the instrument generally is persuasion. A friend sets before us a truth we did not know before; pleads with us; puts it in a new light, and then we say, "Now I see that," and then our hearts are changed towards the thing. Now, although no man's heart is changed by moral suasion in itself, yet the way in which the Spirit works in his heart, as far as we can detect it, is instrumentally by a blessed persuasion of the mind. I say not that men are saved by moral suasion, or that this is the first cause, but I think it is frequently the visible means. As to the secret work, who knows how the Spirit works? "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but thou canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit;" but yet, as far as we can see, the Spirit makes a revelation of truth to the soul, whereby it seeth things in a different light from what it ever did before, and then the will cheerfully bows that neck which once was stiff as iron, and wears the yoke which once it despised, and wears it gladly, cheerfully, and joyfully. Yet, mark, the will is not gone; the will is treated as it should be treated; man is not acted upon as a machine, he is not polished like a piece of marble; he is not planed and smoothed like a plank of deal; but his mind is acted upon by the Spirit of God, in a manner quite consistent with mental laws. Man is thus made a new creature in Christ Jesus, by the will of God, and his own will is blessedly and sweetly made to yield.

Then, mark you, — and this is a point which I want to put into the thoughts of any who are troubled about these things, — this gives the renewed soul a most blessed sign of grace, inso-

much that if any man wills to be saved by Christ, if he wills to have sin forgiven through the precious blood, if he wills to live a holy life resting upon the atonement of Christ, and in the power of the Spirit, that will is one of the most blessed signs of the mysterious working of the Spirit of God in his heart; such a sign is it that if it be real willingness, I will venture to assert that that man is not far from the kingdom. I say not that he is so saved that he himself may conclude he is, but there is a work begun, which has the germ of salvation in it. If thou art willing, depend upon it that God is willing. Soul, if thou art anxious after Christ, he is more anxious after thee. If thou hast only one spark of true desire after him, that spark is a spark from the fire of his love to thee. He has drawn thee, or else thou wouldest never run after him. If you are saying, "Come to me, Jesu," it is because he has come to you, though you do not know it. He has sought you as a lost sheep, and therefore you have sought him like a returning prodigal. He has swept the house to find you, as the woman swept for the lost piece of money, and now you seek him as a lost child would seek a father's face. Let your willingness to come to Christ be a hopeful sign and symptom.

But once more, and let me have the ear of the anxious yet again. It appears that when you have a willingness to come to Christ, there is a special promise for you. You know, my dear hearers, that we are not accustomed in this house of prayer to preach one side of truth, but we try if we can to preach it all. There are some brethren with small heads, who, when they have heard a strong doctrinal sermon, grow into hyper-Calvinists, and then when we preach an inviting sermon to poor sinners, they cannot understand it, and say it is a yea and nay gospel. Believe me, it is not yea and nay, but yea and yea. We give our yea to all truth, and our nay we give to no doctrine of God. Can a sinner be saved when he wills to come to Christ? Yea. And if he does come, does he come because God brings

him? Yea. We have no nays in our theology for any revealed truth. We do not shut the door on one word and open it to another. Those are the yea and nay people who have a nay to the poor sinner, when they profess to preach the gospel. As soon as a man has any willingness given to him, he has a special promise. Before he had that willingness he had an invitation. Before he had any willingness, it was his duty to believe in Christ, for it is not man's condition that gives him a right to believe. Men are to believe in obedience to God's command. God commandeth all men everywhere to repent, and this is his great command, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." "This is the commandment, that ye believe in Jesus Christ whom he has sent." Hence your right and your duty to believe; but once you have got the willingness, then you have a special promise—"Whosoever will let him come." That is a sort of extraordinary invitation. Methinks this is the utterance of the special call. You know how John Bunyan describes the special call in words to this effect. "The hen goes clucking about the farm-yard all day long; that is the general call of the gospel; but she sees a hawk up in the sky, and she gives a sharp cry for her little ones to come and hide under her wings; that is the special call; they come and are safe." My text is a special call to some of you. Poor soul! are you willing to be saved? "O, sir, willing, willing indeed; I cannot use that word; I would give all I have if I might but be saved." Do you mean you would give it all in order to purchase it? "Oh no, sir, I do not mean that; I know I cannot purchase it; I know it is God's gift, but still, if I could but be saved, I would ask nothing else.

*'Lord, deny me what thou wilt,
Only ease me of my guilt ;
Suppliant at thy feet I lie,
Give me Christ, or else I die.'*

Why, then the Lord speaks to you this morning, to you if not to any other man in the chapel, he speaks to you and says—"Whosoever will let him come." You cannot say this does not mean you. When we give the general invitation, you may exempt yourself perhaps in some way or other, but you cannot now. You are willing, then come and take the water of life freely. "Had not I better pray?" It does not say so; it says, take the water of life. "But had not I better go home and get better?" No, take the water of life, and take the water of life now. You are standing by the fountain outside there, and the water is flowing and you are willing to drink; you are picked out of a crowd who are standing round about, and you are specially invited by the person who built the fountain. He says, "Here is a special invitation for you; you are willing; come and drink." "Sir," you say, "I must go home and wash my pitcher." "No," says he, "come and drink." "But, sir, I want to go home and write a petition to you." "I do not want it," he says, "drink now, drink now." What would you do? If you were dying of thirst, you would just put your lips down and drink. Soul, do that now. Believe that Jesus Christ is able to save thee now. Trust thy soul in his hands now. No preparation is wanted. Whosoever will let him come; let him come at once and take the water of life freely. To take that water is simply to trust Christ; to repose on him; to take him to be your all in all. Oh that thou wouldest do it now!

Thou art willing; God has made thee willing. When the crusaders heard the voice of Peter the hermit, as he bade them go to Jerusalem to take it from the hands of the invaders, they cried out at once, "Deus vult; God wills it; God wills it;" and every man plucked his sword from its scabbard, and set out to reach the holy sepulchre, for God willed it. So come and drink, sinner; God wills it. Trust Jesus; God wills it. If you will it, that is the sign that God wills it. "Father, thy will be done on earth

even as it is in heaven." As sinners, humbly stoop to drink of the flowing crystal which streams from the sacred fountain which Jesus opened for his people; let it be said in heaven,

"God's will is done; hallelujah, hallelujah!"

*"It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that
runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy;"*

yet

*"Whosoever will let him come and take the
water of life freely."*

SEVENTY-FOUR
'TILL WE MEET AGAIN

SERMON GIVEN ON JANUARY 1, 1970

SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 22:21

FROM: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

VOLUME 27

*"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you
all. Amen."*

REVELATION 22:21.

THE first saints could never be long without speaking of their Lord and Saviour. He filled their hearts, and therefore they must needs speak of him. How ingeniously they bring him in! When they commence an epistle the salutation will be sure to bear his name. When they are in the midst of a letter, they lay down their pen and offer a prayer; and when they begin again it is with a benediction in which his name is prominent, or with a doxology ascribing glory unto him, with the Father, and with the Holy Ghost. John's Book of Revelation is full of Christ. Its

opening verse rings out the precious name, and the closing line which is now before us repeats the heavenly music. Is not the Lord Jesus the sum and substance, the glory of every vision seen in Patmos? May I not say of the Apocalypse, as John said of the New Jerusalem, "the Lamb is the light thereof"? until he looses the seals and opens the roll, the book of John's prophecy is so folded up that no man shall understand it.

John could not finish his book without mentioning that name which was dearest of all names to him, As he puts aside his pen to write no more, he concludes with an invocation of blessing upon all the saints in every place; and this is the form of it: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." Paul is thought to have claimed the use of this benediction as his particular token: "in every epistle so I write." I am not sure that it is so, for I suspect that the apostle referred to his own large handwriting, and to the signature which he put to his letters. But still, according to many interpreters, Paul used this particular blessing as his private mark, the seal of the authenticity of a letter. See the end of the epistles to the Corinthians and Thessalonians: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." Certainly Paul used the words often; but, perhaps, when Paul had been taken up, John deemed it right to adopt Paul's motto, and with it to set, as it were, his stamp and seal upon the last book of Revelation. It was a benediction which could not be engrossed by any one apostle, nor indeed by all the apostles put together. Paul made it his own, but John had equal right to use it; and it is now all the dearer to us because both these mighties employed it.

Brethren, the benediction before us is not only Paul's word and John's word, and the Bible's last word, but it is now the chosen word of all the ministers of Jesus Christ. Is not this the benediction with which we dismiss the faithful: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion

of the Holy Spirit be with you all”? So shall it remain until the Lord shall come a second time. It is an expression suitable to the most gracious heart, a prayer wherewith the believer may vent his best wishes and express his most devout desires. Over you all at this time, in my own most humble but sincere manner, I would pronounce the benediction, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.”

If the Spirit shall help me, I would at this time first say, let us consider this benediction; and then, secondly, let us consider its peculiar position; for something can be learned therefrom.

I. First, then, let us CONSIDER THIS BENEDICTION. It divides itself into three parts, under these heads,— What? How? and, To whom?

1. What? What is this which John desires when he says,— “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all”?

The word is Charis. I do not think any better translation could be given than “grace”: it is usually translated grace throughout the New Testament. Those who understand the Greek language thoroughly tell us that it has for its root “joy.” There is joy at the bottom of Charis, or grace. It also signifieth favour, kindliness, and especially love; and I might, without violating the meaning of the Spirit, read the words thus: “The love of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.” But inasmuch as love to unworthy creatures such as we are can only display itself in free favour— that is, grace, and we know that the term used is an accurate expression, we will let it stand as it is, only putting in a drop or two of the sweet honey of the love which lies within it. John desires that we may have the free favour of Jesus Christ, the love of Jesus Christ, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ himself is generally mentioned in our benedictions as having grace, and the Father as having love; and our usual benediction begins with the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God. Is that the proper order? Should we

not rather say the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit? Brethren, the order observed in the benediction is that of our experience, the order in which we learn, the order in which we receive. We first receive the grace and free favour which are in Christ Jesus, and then from these we learn the love of the Father; for no man cometh unto the Father but by Jesus Christ. The order is correct to our experience, and in an instructive benediction the Holy Spirit intendeth this for our learning.

The Father's love is, as it were, the secret, mysterious germ of everything. That same love in Jesus Christ is grace; his is love in its active form, love descending to earth, love wearing human nature, love paying the great ransom price, love ascending, love sitting and waiting, love pleading, love soon to come with power and glory. The eternal love which, as it were, did lie in the bosom of the Father, rises up and comes into activity, and is then called the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is therefore the grace of a divine person. We wish you, brethren, as we wish for ourselves, the grace of God himself, rich, boundless, unfathomable, immutable, divine; no temporary grace such as some speak of, which keepeth not its own, but suffereth even the sheep of its own pasture to go astray and perish; but the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom it is written, "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end"; that grace most potent which said, "None shall pluck them out of my hand." We wish this grace to be with you, the grace which loved you or ever the earth was made,— "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee"; the grace which will be with you when this poor world shall have melted back into the nothingness from whence it sprang: infinite, everlasting, unchanging grace— we wish you may have that. May its divine height, and depth, and length, and breadth be enjoyed by you; may you know the

loving grace of Christ which passeth knowledge; may you grasp the unsearchable riches of Christ. This is no small treasure,— this grace of a divine person.

Yet is our Lord Jesus also human, as truly human as he is divine, and, believing in him, you have the grace of Jesus Christ the man to be with you all. May you feel his tenderness, his brotherliness, his grace. He is your kinsman, and he graciously favours his own kinsfolk. The man is next of kin unto us, and as Ruth enjoyed all the love of Boaz, so may you possess all the heart of Jesus. May he redeem your inheritance for you, and take you to himself to be his own, in blessed union with himself for ever. May the grace of the Man of Nazareth, the grace of the Son of Mary be with you, as well as the grace of “God over all, blessed for ever,” to whom be praise. The grace of that wondrous person who is God and man in one person, and whom we call Lord, is now solemnly invoked upon you.

Read the text again, and pause a while in the middle to enjoy “The grace of our Lord” Whatever familiarity we have with him, we call him Master and Lord, and he saith, “Ye do well, for so I am.” Let us never forget that. The grace that cometh from his majesty, the grace that cometh from his headship, the grace that cometh from his divinely human supremacy over his church, which is his body— this is the grace which we desire for you all.

Read the next word, “the grace of our Lord Jesus”: may that be with you; that is to say, the grace of our Saviour, for that is the meaning of the word Jesus. All his saving grace, all that which redeems from guilt, from sin, from trouble, all that which saves us with an everlasting salvation,— may that be yours to the full.

Then comes the other word, “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you”; may he, as the Anointed One, visit you. May the grace of his anointing be with you, may the holy

anointing which was poured upon the Head come down upon you, as the sacred nard dropped from Aaron's beard and perfumed all his robes. May you have that anointing from the Holy One which shall make you know all things.

I am tempted to linger over each one of these words, but I may not, for time would forbid. Yet must we tarry on that word "our." "May the grace of our Lord." Catch at that sweet word. It may not

perhaps be genuine in this case, for it is not in the Sinaitic manuscript, but whether it is so in this particular instance or not, it is in the Word, and stands for ever true. Jesus is our Lord, — our Lord Jesus Christ: both yours and ours. May the fulness of his grace be with you and with us.

2. Our next division is *How?* "May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." What meaneth this? Our first answer is the wish that the grace of our Lord may rest upon you as a matter of fact,— that he may love you truly and intensely; love you, not only as he loves the world, but as he loved his own which were in the world. May you have his redemption, not as a general thing, but according to that word, "He hath redeemed us from among men out of every kindred." May you have the special, peculiar love which Christ hath to those whom his Father gave him, whose names are on his breastplate, and for whom he has paid an effectual ransom price, that they thereby might be delivered: may such grace be with you. As a matter of fact may it rest upon you as the chosen, adopted, called, and sanctified.

Next, may you believe that grace, may you trust that grace, may it be with you because your faith has closed in with it, and you are relying upon it. You believe that Jesus loves you; you believe in his grace, and trust yourself to him, committing your spirit to the keeping of that hand which was pierced and

fastened to the cross for you. May his grace be with you in that sense, so that you realize it.

Still further, may his grace be with you as the object of faith, so that your belief comes to be full assurance, till you know the love which Christ hath towards you, and no more doubt it than you doubt the love of the dearest friend you have on earth. May his love be a present fact, and not a thing to be questioned, a treasure in which you glory in the secret places of your soul, saying, "He loved me, and gave himself for me." May his grace be with you in the sense that you are confidently assured of it.

And may his grace be with you, next, as to the favours which flow out of it May you enjoy all the blessings which the grace of Christ can yield, the grace of a peaceful conscience, the grace of a cleansed walk, the grace of access to God, the grace of fervent love, the grace of holy expectancy, the grace of self-denial, the grace of perfect consecration, and the grace of final perseverance. May the fountain and well-head be with you, that so the sparkling streams may flow at your feet.

And may grace be with us, next, so as to produce constant communion between us and Christ, his favour flowing into our heart, and our hearts returning their gratitude. Oh, to carry on blessed commerce with Christ, exchanging weakness for strength, sin for righteousness, and trust for care. O to give love for love and heart for heart, till my best love loves me, and my best love is all his own. Oh, to come to this pass, that our Well-beloved is with us, and we enjoy sweet mutual intercourse: this is to have the love, or grace, of Jesus with us.

May our Lord Jesus Christ thus in his grace be with us, and may he work for us all that he can work. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you, brethren, when you desire to pray; then may the great High Priest intercede for you. May the

grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you, so that when you are downcast he may say, "Let not your heart be troubled." May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you to check you when you are likely to start aside, to guide you when you know not your way, to inspirit you when you are ready to be cast down, to confirm you when you have almost slipped with your feet. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you when heart and flesh are failing you, when the last hour has come, and you are about to appear before God. God grant you to know always all that Christ can do in you, and for you, and with you, and by you. What better benediction could John himself utter?

3. But, now, the third part of our discourse comes under the head of "to whom." "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." Surely if we were to take this in the widest possible sense, and say— may it be with you all, it could not be wrong to wish that all should have the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ with them; yet I know some sound brethren are very jealous of anything that looks like a wide expression, an expression which would wish good to all. For my own part, I do not understand the nature of the orthodoxy which would limit benevolent desires. I should like to be more and more heterodox in the direction of desiring good to all that come in my way. Would to God that the best that could happen to all men did happen to them. I would without the slightest hypocrisy breathe this desire over all mankind, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." Still, there is no doubt that the connection in which it stands, and also certain versions of it, do confine this benediction to the saints, and practically it must always be confined to them, for the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is only known and enjoyed by those who have given their hearts to Jesus, and are living by him, in him, and to him. Let us wish the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to all the saints, at any rate. Some of the saints will hardly own us; but

may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with them. They would not let us preach in their pulpits; but may grace be with them. They would not partake of the communion with us; but may grace be with them. They call us sectarians and schismatics, but may “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with them all. Amen,” with every one of them, whoever they may be. If they are in Jesus Christ, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with them. Every now and then you come across a book written by one who is along way off from understanding all the truth, yet he knows Jesus Christ, and as you read the sweet words that come from his pen concerning the Master you feel your heart knit to him. Your soul feels that it is a pity that the writer was a High Churchman, but if he loves the Lord Jesus Christ we forget his errors, and are delighted with the life of Jesus which we see in him. If a man knows Christ, he knows the most important of matters, and is possessed of a secret quite as precious as any in our own keeping, for what know we more than Christ, and what hope have we but in Christ? If thou lovest Christ, give me thy hand, my friend, notwithstanding thy blunders. If Christ be all thy trust and all thy confidence, I am sorry for thine eyes that thou canst not see a great deal more, I am sorry for thine head that thou canst not think more straight, but thine heart is in the right place resting on Jesus, reposing on him, and who am I that I should judge thee? There is a life in Christ which a thousand errors cannot kill. There is a life which is the same in all that have it, however diverse they may happen to be upon opinion or outward ceremony. There is a life eternal, and that life is Christ Jesus, and to all that have that life we do with intensity of heart say, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.”

I notice Paul says this in one of his epistles to a church that misbehaved itself dreadfully. It was one of the churches that would not have any minister; a church where they all spoke as

they pleased, to whom Paul said, "God is not the author of confusion." They were so depraved a church that they allowed an incestuous person to be present at the communion, but still, after the apostle had rebuked them, he said, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." Even so must we say to those who err ignorantly, as the Corinthians did. If we differ from brethren, if we have to rebuke them, if sometimes they also rebuke us, and show temper over it, yet may this be the finale of it all, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." Should we not wish the highest degree of grace to all who are in the body of Christ? Let us not utter this benediction merely because we ought to say it, but because we delight to say it: let us not only wish well to the saints because we are bound to wish them well, but because our hearts cannot do otherwise.

II. So now, not to detain you much longer, I ask your earnest attention for a few minutes to THE POSITION OF THIS BENEDICTION.

First, I draw what I have to say from the fact that it is the last word of Scripture. I regard it, therefore, as being the apostle's last and highest wish. We are glad to find that, while the Old Testament finishes with a curse—"Lest I come and smite the earth with a curse," the New Testament concludes with a blessing, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all": as if to show that the very life and spirit of a Christian should be blessing; and this should be to us our last and highest wish for men—that they may receive and retain the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. I wish this blessing to you all, my dear brothers and sisters. Whatever you may miss, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be always with you. In whatsoever points you or any of us may fail, may we never come short of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. What if the preacher should preach to others, and himself be a castaway! Pray that it be not so. What if a deacon or elder should lead the flock of Christ, and yet the

grace of our Lord Jesus Christ should not be with him! He would become another Judas or Demas. That would be dreadful. What if you should teach the little ones in the school, and yet not learn yourselves! It would be a sad thing to have come to the Lord's Supper, and yet never to have eaten his flesh and drunk his blood: to be immersed in water, but never to have known the baptism of the Holy Spirit, nor to have been baptized into Christ with the spiritual baptism. What a thing it will be, if, after all our professions, and all our labours, and all our teachings, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ should not be with us. I pray, brethren, whatever other prayer may not be granted, that this may be, concerning every member of this church, and every member of every church of Jesus Christ, that at any rate the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ may be with us. We cannot do with less than this, and we do not want more than this. If we get grace from Jesus we shall have glory with Jesus, but without it we are without hope. Standing at the end of the Book of Revelation as this does, I next regard its position as indicating what we shall want till the end comes; that is, from now till the descent of our Lord in his second advent. This is the one thing we require, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." May it be with us daily, hourly! May it be with us, instructing us as to our behaviour in each generation! May it be with us cleansing us from all sin; enabling us to walk in the light as he is in the light! May it be with us, strengthening us to carry our daily burdens, and to bear our witness for his name under the varying circumstances of the ages. May it be with us counselling us when the trials of life distract us! With us transfiguring us from glory to glory, till we shall bear the image of Jesus Christ? May it be with us all-sufficiently! Hath he not said, "My grace is sufficient for thee"? May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all in every way in which you shall require it till he cometh! He can furnish you with the

whole armour of God; he can equip you with all the necessities of the pilgrim life. For our labour as gospel-fishermen he supplies all the nets that we shall require, for our work in his vineyard he gives us every tool. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us, and we shall be swift of foot as a young roe, and sure of foot as the hart on the mountain side, that slips not, however slippery the crags may be. Only let Christ be with us and we are complete in him; perfect in Christ Jesus. All the equipment that men shall want between earth and heaven to fight against hell, and to trample on the world, and to enter into eternal perfection, is found in Christ. May his grace be with you all. Amen.

Placed as this blessing is at the end of the book there is but this one more thought,— this is what we shall wish for when the end cometh. We shall come to the end of life, as we come to the end of our Bibles. And oh! aged friend, may thy failing eyes be cheered with the sight of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, on the last page of life, as thou wilt find it on the last page of thy well-thumbed Bible. Peradventure some of you may come to the last page of life before you get grace: I pray that there you may find it. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Or, suppose we should not die; suppose the Lord should suddenly come in his temple. Oh! then may we have grace to meet him. I am so glad that a benediction closes the Apocalypse; for, as you stand in the book of Revelation, you hear the thunders roll, peal after peal, you see the vials poured forth, darkening the air, and sun and moon turned into blackness and blood! Earth reels beneath your feet, and stars fall like fig leaves from the tree! You are full of confusion and dismay, until you hear this holy whisper, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.” Let every star of the firmament fall where it will, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is with us. Rock and reel, ye mountains, and be dissolved, O earth, and pass away; if the grace of our Lord

Jesus Christ be with us we fear not the end. We can serenely look upon the wreck of matter and the crash of worlds. Let the last august tribunal sit, and men be summoned to stand before it, to receive their final doom, we shall without trembling advance before that great white throne and stand there, if the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us.

*“Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who aught to my charge shall lay?
While through his blood absolved I am
From sin’s tremendous curse and shame.”*

Oh! happy they, shrouded, and sheltered, and hidden, in Christ their Saviour; to whom his grace shall be like the white robes of Mount Tabor’s transfiguration, for they shall be accepted in the Beloved, glorified in the glory of their Master. These are they to whom the text shall be fulfilled — “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.”

Finally, brethren, farewell, and as you go out I would like just to take my place at the doorway, to offer my hand of friendship, and say to each one, “Farewell for a little while. This is my best wish for you,— The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.” Will you start back and say, “Sir, I know nothing of this grace”? Then would I ask you to stay a moment while I breathe the prayer, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.” May be there is only a tear of penitence in your eye, no light of faith is there as yet. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you, poor broken-hearted penitent! May be you do not know Jesus yet, and you are only seeking him. His grace be with you now: may he manifest himself to you! And you, backslider, do you feel as if you cannot receive a blessing? The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be especially with you, to raise you up, and set you on your feet again, as he did fallen Peter. I would

like, if I could, to say to the stranger within our gates to-night, who does not often attend the house of God, it is our heart's desire for you that you may know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in truth. To the boys and girls here, the pastor says, "God bless you." Little Mary, or Jane, or John, or Willie, or whatever your name may be, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you"; for he saith, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not." As for you, grey-headed friends, you who will soon be home, I wish you this parting blessing, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you." Till I see you again; "God bless you." Till the day break, and the shadows flee away, may the Lord Jesus never be absent from you.

Amen and amen.

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